
Imprimatur.

Guil. Fane, R.P.D. Hen.
Episc. Lond. à fac. dom.

Nov. 1.
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97. 40

Six Sermons,
Preached (most of them)
AT
S. M A R I E S
I N
C A M B R I D G E.

By ROBERT NEEDHAM, M. A.
late Fellow of Queens Colledge in
Cambridge.

L O N D O N,
Printed by *M. Clark* for *Walter Kettilby*
at the Bishops Head in *S. Pauls Church-*
yard. MDCLXXIX.

Six Sermons

(Preached (most of them)



L O N D O N

Printed by J. M. Clark for Walter, Roper, & Co.
at the Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-yard. MDCCLXXIX.

they would have appeared much

more accurate and exact than now

perhaps some passages in them may

seem to be

To his ever honoured Friend

Dr. WALTER NEEDHAM

at the Charterhouse.

TO ALL VERTUOUS AND DEVOUT READERS,

AND I AM TRULY YOURS,

NOW at length I return you
some of those Papers
which you was pleased so
kindly to commit to my trust: viz.
Six Sermons of your Brothers, I say
not the best I could pick out, (for
indeed all that he composed were
singularly good and useful) but such
as either he chose to preach in the
most publick places, or else were
more particularly desired by some
of his friends.

Had he himself designed or pre-
pared these Discourses for the Press,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

they would have appeared much more accurate and exact, than now perhaps some passages in them may seem to be; nor durst I venture to make any considerable alterations. However as they are, I doubt not but they will be highly acceptable to all serious and devout Readers, and I am sure they are far above the contempt even of the Criticks, and Wits of the Age.

Of such great moment are the Subjects here treated of, so plain and familiar is the Stile, so weighry and sound the Arguments, that there needs no other reason to be given of these Sermons being made publick, than that they are so excellently fitted to do good. Unless you, Sir, give me leave to mention this one; that these Papers will be a lasting Evidence and testimony to your self and others his dear Re-
lations

The Epistle Dedicatory.

lations of the incomparable worth, sweet temper, and undissembled Piety of your Brother; since you may by them to your no little satisfaction easily perceive, what a very considerable man he was likely to have proved, what good reason you had to love him as you did, and how amply your great care of his Education was recompensed and fully answered by those extraordinary improvements he made of himself in so short a time, though under much indisposition of body, and of late Years labouring under a tedious incurable Disease: I may well call it incurable, since it resisted even all your skill and pains, and in spite of all you your self could do, at last prevailed against him, whose life above others you so passionately wished and desired.

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But here I think my self bound to add, that he will be apt to do great wrong to the memory of our Author, who shall make a judgment of his Learning and Abilities onely by what he may find in this little Book. Preaching, perhaps, was his least Talent; a Work he but lately entered upon, and by the By onely performed. You know, Sir, he observed a just and prudent Method in his Studies, and had laid in a great Stock of useful Knowledge of all kinds, designing all along not so much to fit himself for these Pulpit Exercises, as to be a General Scholar.

And indeed such he was, there being few parts of Learning in which he had not made a considerable progress. On which account he became most eminently serviceable to *Queens Colledge*; his

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his known merits and prudence drawing many young Gentlemen and others under his care, to their own singular advantage, and the credit of that Royal Foundation.

Nor was he onely admired in, or useful to his own particular Colledge, but so remarkable was his Worth and Goodness, that his Friendship and Acquaintance was desired by many others. His Learning gained him every where Authority and Respect, and his good Nature and most obliging Carriage won him the love and favour of the whole University; so that he was the Man, of whom I never heard any one say an ill word.

It is difficult for me here to forbear; so pleasant is it to me to think of my Old Friend Mr. NEEDHAM. And I know I shall be sufficiently blamed by his Acquaintance for
saying

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saying so little of such an excellent person. One will tell me, that at least his wonderful modesty and perfect freedom from all manner of pride and conceit; another, that the briskness of his fanſie, and the pleasantness of his humour and conversation, whilest he enjoyed any measure of health; a third, that his admirable Patience, and Indifferency as to this World; others, that his faithful and truly friendly temper; that these with many other of his excellent Vertues ought to have been duly rehearsed and commemorated. Every one that knew him will find fault, that something or other, for which he was exemplary, is now omitted.

It was the saying of a great Roman, when he was asked why his Statue was not erected in the Market-place, as well as of many others
of

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of far less note and desert; that he had much rather people should wonder and enquire why he had no Statue, than that any should ask why he had one. I had much rather be censured for falling infinitely short of what my Subject might justly challenge, than that any one should upon this or any like occasion, accuse me of Flattery or Complement.

After all I must confess, Sir, I have one private selfish design in this Dedication; which is, to take this occasion most thankfully to acknowledg your great undeserved favours and kindnesses to me, which I can put on no other account, but your own goodness, and that your Brother would please to call me his Friend. I am

Your most obliged and humble Servant,

BEN. CALAMY.

The Epistle Dedicatorie

of his leisure and desire, when he
had much rather people should
wonder and enquire why he had
no stone, than that any should ask
why he had one. I had much rather
be counted for killing infinitely
those of what my subject might
justly challenge, than that any one
should upon this or any like occa-
sion accuse me of Flattery or Com-
pliments.

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one private selfish design in this pre-
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ceeds would please to call me his
Friend. I am

Your most obliged and humble servant

BEN. CALVERT

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SERMON I.

S. MATT. V. V. 44.

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

THe design of our Blessed Saviours coming into the World, as he himself declares at the 17. verse of this Chapter, was *not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.* This he performed, partly by doing, and suffering all that the Prophets had foretold concerning him, and by accomplishing what was fore-shewn

B by

by the Types and Shadows of the Law ; partly by his divine Discourses and Sermons giving new life and authority to those Rules of Good Living they had been taught by *Moses* ; adding to, and improving them where they were defective, and restoring them to their primitive sense and purity, where they were either obscurely delivered, or by the misinterpretation of their Doctors were generally misunderstood : and this he did suitably to the different nature of those Commands which they had received in *Moses's* Law ; some whereof consisted of Rites and Ceremonial Observances, which were a Shadow of things to come, and were upon the accomplishment of those things presently to have an end : Others contained the necessary Rules of Good Living, and were of an absolute and unchangeable nature. Now so it came to pass, that the Jews, a People infinitely prone to Superstition, were very nice and curious in the observance of those outward Circumstances and Ceremonies of the Law, even to the neglect of the greater duties of Righteousness, Judgment and Mercy, which they ought chiefly to have done, though not to have left the other undone.

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undone. The blame of this practice is by our Saviour frequently laid upon the Scribes and Pharisees, who then were the great pretenders to the Righteousness of the Law, yet in truth the greatest corrupters of it, by laying the chief stress upon the outward and less material circumstances, and evacuating the moral parts of it by too nice and narrow interpretations. Our Saviour therefore having declared that he came *to fulfil the Law and the Prophets*, in pursuance of that design at the 20. v. he forewarns his Hearers of this practice and doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees; *I say unto you, Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And that they might not be ignorant in what particulars they ought to exceed what the Pharisees taught, in the continuance of his Sermon he gives them several instances, wherein the Law of Moses, partly by its own obscurity, partly by their misinterpretations was generally misunderstood. Among other parts of the Moral Law which were not well understood by the Jews, there was none to which they were greater strangers,

than this in the Text of *Loving Enemies.*

They had received *Levit. xix. 18.* this precept, *Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* Now the Jews understanding the word *Neighbour* only of the children of their People, of men of their own Tribe and Country, of men that kept mutual correspondence and agreement with them, they took it for granted that as for other men who were strangers and aliens to them, they were at full liberty to exercise what revenge they pleased, as appears by the Verse before the Text, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy.* But this latter clause, *and hate thine Enemy*, was an additional interpretation, no where to be found in the Law; and was in truth contrary to the true intent and meaning of the former precept of *Loving our Neighbour*, as appears by our Saviours explication of it, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy: but I say unto you, love your Enemies, &c.*

Having thus far shewn the Connexion
of

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of these words with the foregoing, and with the design of the whole Chapter, I shall now consider them by themselves, and shall endeavour to set before you,

1. The Nature and Extent of the Duty enjoined.

2. Our Obligation to the practice of it.

I begin with the Nature and Extent of this Duty, *Love your Enemies, &c.*

The word *Love* is of a very large signification, and in the language of holy Scripture is generally used to express the whole duty of man. Thus our Saviour useth it in the Summary of Religion which he taught the Lawyer, telling him that the whole Law was comprised in these two things; the love of God and of our Neighbour: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first and great Commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self: on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* By which use of the word it is plain, that the *Love of our Neighbour* includes all the Duties and Offices which one man can owe to another; and so it is here to be understood

Matth. 22.
37.

when applied to *Enemies*, as appears by the connexion of these words with the former Verse, *We have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour and hate thine Enemy; but I say unto you, Love your Enemies.* Where it is plain, our Saviour altered not the comprehensive signification of the word, only enlarged the object of it, viz. that whereas they had been before taught to confine their *Love*, that is, the several offices of Justice and Charity, onely to their *Neighbours*, that is, as they understood it, only to their Friends and Countrymen; they should now extend the same offices to *Enemies* likewise as well as to them, not onely to Strangers and Aliens, but to those also that profest hatred to them, and did them injury. This he prescribes first generally by the name of *Love*, *I say unto you, Love your Enemies*; and then, lest they should make too narrow an interpretation of the word, he further explains it by the most obliging instances can be given of it, and that in opposition to the contrary practice of their *Enemies*; *Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.*

But

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But not to insist upon this large signification of the word, I shall now onely take notice of those offices which are peculiarly due to our *Enemies* as such, over and above what can be due to the rest of our *Neighbours*; and those are referred usually to these three general Heads.

1. That we do not return those evils upon our Enemy which he hath done us.

2. That we forgive him from our hearts.

3. That we recompense good to him when he stands in need of our assistance.

1. If we are commanded to *love our Enemies*, it is easie to understand that we are hereby forbidden all practices towards him that are inconsistent with Love and Charity, and therefore that we must forbear all acts of revenge and hostility towards him, all recompensing evil for evil. This branch of our duty our Saviour particularly teaches at the 38, 39. verses of this Chapter, *Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* Where by the way we may observe, that

our Saviour doth prevent the most plausible Argument men are wont to use to justify their revenge. *Veterem ferenda injuriam inquit as novam*, was always a pretence for it: and many men who would otherwise be thought good Christians are still apt to urge it as a sufficient reason to return evil upon their adversaries, because otherwise they may by too much forbearance be encouraged to go on in the same practice of doing injuries and offering affronts. Now the case here mentioned by our Saviour, is very plain in opposition to that pretence, *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*. The meaning of which words is, that in matters of less moment, as the instance there given is, the good Christian ought rather expose himself to further injuries, than return the same usage to his adversary that he hath suffered from him, or be guilty of any revengeful act. So patient must the Servant of the Lord be toward all men, *not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing*.

1 Pet. 3.9.

— This duty will, I know, seem very difficult to men of this generation, who are usually so far from being satisfied with an

an equal return of evil upon their adversaries, that their revenge seldom ends with less then the death or ruine of their brethren, and that often upon very slight or no provocation. It is indeed a sad thing to consider, that in a Christian Commonwealth Point of Honour and Gallantry should be so often pleaded as a just pretence for Bloudshed and Slaughter, that a rash word, or a contumelious expression should be thought a sufficient provocation to engage life and soul too in pursuance of our revenge, and that in contradiction to so plain a precept, which by the profession of Christianity we stand obliged to. But how dangerous a choice these men make, I shall have occasion to discourse by and by. In the meantime we are to know that the forbearing Revenge is but the first and lowest degree of that Charity, which the Gospel requires towards our Enemies, and is expressed hereby the name of *Love*.

2. It is not sufficient that we abstain from outward acts of Hostility and Revenge towards our Enemies, but we must lay aside all thoughts and desires of it. We are not to wish the same evil to our Neighbour that he hath done to us, we are

are not to retain any angry or malicious thought, no grudge or animosity, no secret hate or envious design against the person of any man, how much soever he hath been our Enemy. We may have other reasons that may oblige us to refrain from outward acts of Revenge: sometimes we may be too weak to do it, and want power or opportunity to execute our designs of evil: sometimes it may be against some other interest of ours which we prefer before it; and to forbear Revenge onely in such circumstances is no part of our obedience to this precept of our Saviour, which extends it self to the inward motions and dispositions of our soul, and requires that our forgiveness be from the heart. And indeed the primary intention of all the divine Law, is to regulate the inward thoughts and habitual inclinations of the Soul, and to bring them into subjection and conformity to the will of God. Nor can we be said to obey any one precept of the Gospel onely by abstaining from the visible acts of sin, unless we do likewise mortifie and subdue the secret lusts, and inordinate desires of our heart, which are the inward principles and seeds of our out-

outward actions: according to which the good or evil of them will be measured.

To be sure the word *Love* is of all other most properly to be understood of the inward affections of the Soul, and therefore we are obliged by this precept to lay aside, and restrain all those black passions which any ways prompt us to seek revenge, or rejoice in the hurt that befalls our Neighbour. To this purpose

is *S. Pauls* direction *Ephes. iv. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christs sake hath forgiven you.* Nay, the Scripture is so positive in this case, that though we should forbear to return evil upon our brother that hath offended us, though our hand be not upon him to kill him, or do him hurt; yet if we nourish in our bosom any angry and malicious thought against him, if we wish harm to him; or rejoice over those evils that befall him, this would be as direct a breach of the Law of forgiveness, as though we our selves had been the executioners of our Revenge upon him. So *S. John* tells us, *1 John*

iiii. 15. *Whoſoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* *and his blood is to live to hang*
 3. There is yet a further degree of Charity towards our Enemies. We must not onely forbear the return of evil, we must not onely forgive them heartily and wish them no evil, but we are obliged also to exercise acts of mercy and goodness to them; we must be ready to do them good whensoever they may need it from us. *If thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink.* But possibly he needs no such assistance, possibly his malice is such that he would scorn thy offer, yet still thou mayest do him good whether he will or no; thy Prayers are in thy own power, he cannot refuse the assistance of them; he cannot defeat the design of this Charity. Offer therefore thy prayers to God for him, that the wickedness of his heart may be forgiven him, and that he may be indued with the spirit of Peace and Charity. This last branch of duty is the perfection of the other two, and is chiefly intended in this place. *But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, &c.* And thus much may suffice briefly to explain the nature of this duty.
 I come now to consider the extent of it;

it: For it may be demanded, How oft, and to what degree shall my Brother sin against me, and I be bound to forgive him and love him? must I always yield to Injuries and Reproaches? Can no wound be so deep as to remove my brother from my affection, and to justifie my revenge? Must there be no end of my forbearance and suffering? In answer to these Queries, there are these two things to be considered.

1. As to the number and multitude of our Brothers injuries against us, we may remember that *S. Matth. xviii. 21.* it is recorded of *S. Peter*, that he came to Jesus, and said, *Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?* *Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee untill seven times: but, untill seventy times seven.* Now by this manner of speech our Saviour plainly intended, not to set bounds or limits to our forgiveness, but to declare rather that it ought to be unlimited, that no transgressions of our Brother, how often soever they be repeated, ought to exclude him from our forgiveness and charity.

2. As to the other part of the Question, touching the heinousness of our
Bro-

Brothers offences against us, it is plaine likewise, that no degree of guilt in him can put him out of the reach of our pardon, unless we also would be content that God should exclude us from that forgiveness we pray for: forso our Saviour hath taught us to pray, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* If we therefore forgive partially, if we except any of our Brethrens trespasses from our pardon, because forsooth they are too great to be forgiven, what can we expect but that God should deal with us according to our prayers, and leave us under the weight of our most hainous transgressions? and how unsupportable a burden this would be, judge ye. By what hath been said it is easie to conclude, that this precept doth oblige us to an universal Forgiveness and Charity towards our Enemies, how many and how great soever their offences have been.

— There remains one case still to be considered, *viz.* the Civil Magistrate is appointed by God a Revenger, to execute wrath upon them that do evil, not upon those onely who sin immediately against God, but upon those also who are injurious

rious to their Neighbours. Nor could Civil Society subsist without such a standing power. It may therefore be reasonably demanded, that if God hath established such a power amongst men, for the relief of the injured, and punishment of offenders, how can it be unlawful to make use of that remedy? and then surely all return of evil upon our Adversaries is not forbidden by this precept of loving Enemies. Nor would God have appointed his publick Officers for the punishment of Injustice and Wrong, if the persons injured might not lawfully implead those who did the wrong, and seek that reparation which the Laws of God and Man have provided. And indeed if our Saviour did universally oblige us tamely to yield to all kind of injuries, without making our just defence, or seeking reparation from the Law, this would be the direct way to disorder and confusion, and would justify that objection which is wont to be made against this precept, that it exposed good men to ruine and poverty, and gave security onely to the violent and oppressours.

But to free our Saviours Doctrine from so undeserved a calumny, it is to be considered,

1. That

1. That this Precept is primarily intended as a Rule for private persons, in that capacity, that they should by no means make themselves judges in their own cause, and assume to themselves the power of taking vengeance, and exacting what satisfaction they thought fit for the injuries they received. Not but that Injustice and Wrong ought to receive its due punishment even amongst men; but because private persons are not to be trusted in their own concern, therefore God hath reserved this power to himself; and to Magistrates commissioned by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well. And to these all private persons ought to refer the judgment of their cause, and reparation of their wrongs; and this I take to be the force of *S. Pauls* reason, why we should not avenge our selves, *Rom. xii. 19.* *Dearly beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Vengeance belongs to God, the Magistrate is Gods Revenger, therefore private persons must not pretend to any such authority over their adversaries.

2. If

It is to be considered further, that there is a wide difference to be made between prosecuting an injurious man, and seeking revenge. The former of these may be done without any breach of Charity, or diminution of our affection towards him, may possibly it may be the cruellest piece of revenge to let men alone in their evil practices, or to suffer them to enjoy the fruits of Injustice without calling them to account for it. The success of unrighteous actions may by degrees harden them in sin, and bring down the severer judgments of God upon them, should they escape humane Justice. So that to give a timely check to our Neighbour when he deals unjustly by us, may possibly be a means of gaining our Brother, when private admonitions may not prove effectual. So that this is no ways inconsistent with an hearty forgiveness, and unfeigned charity toward our Enemy. In short then, we may lawfully implead those who have done us wrong, onely we must observe great care and moderation in it; we must not go to Law for every trifling and light occasion, we must be careful not to do it with any malicious design against the person we

contend with. For though our adversary be justly punished, yet if we pursue him with intention to gratifie our own passion in his sufferings, we can in no wise be found guiltless of the breach of this duty. But thus much may suffice for the first thing proposed, the Nature and Extent of the Duty enjoined, *Love your Enemies, &c.*

I come now to shew the great obligation that is laid upon us to the practice of this duty; which I shall endeavour to enforce.

1. From the quality of the Law-giver intimated in these words, *I say unto you.*
2. From the nature of the Precept.
3. Because our greatest interest doth indispensably depend upon the practice of it.

As for the quality of the Lawgiver expressed in those words, *I say unto you, &c.*

1. If we look upon our Saviour only as a Prophet come from God to declare his will to Mankind, to make them understand more clearly what it is that the Lord requires of them, yet this alone were sufficient to challenge our obedience to this, and all his Commands. That God, whose Creatures we are, on whom

whom we depend daily for our subsistence and wel-being, from whom we have received life and breath, and all things we enjoy, and from whom alone we can receive whatever we hope for, this God, whose natural born Subjects we are, hath by our Saviour given us the most clear and perfect revelation of his will, and doth accordingly by him require the most entire and universal obedience to it. Nor is there any Doctrine he doth more frequently insist on, or more earnestly persuade us to obey, than this of the Text, of *Loving Enemies*. The Will of God, whensoever made known to us, is a sufficient reason of the obligation of any of his Laws: and our blessed Saviour brought with him such undeniable evidences that he came from God, and delivered his Doctrine with so great demonstrations of the truth, and divine authority of what he spake, that he extorted from his very adversaries this confession, *Matt. 22. 15. Master we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth.* This was that Prophet whom God himself spake of so long before to Moses, saying, *Dent. xviii. 18. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee;*

thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him; and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. And what is meant by those words, I will require it, S. Peter explains *Acts* iii. 23. where citing this prophecy, he tells us, and it shall come to pass, that every soul that will not hear that Prophet, shall be cut off from among the people. If therefore we look upon our Saviour onely as that Prophet, yet this alone gives sufficient authority and obligation to his Precepts, and he might justly pronounce *pro Imperio*, I say unto you love your Enemies.

Heb. ii. 2.

2. We are not to look upon our Saviour onely as a Prophet; it is true, he was a Prophet mighty in deed and in word, but he was withall much more than a Prophet: for God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds. Now if the dignity of the Embassadour add any weight or authority to the Message he delivers, then surely by how much greater the Son
of

of God is, than those other Prophets and Ministers whom God in former Ages sent forth to declare his will to the World, so much more inexcusable must those men be, who reject the precepts of the Gospel, and refuse obedience to those Laws which are revealed to them by the Son of God himself. This is the inference S. Paul makes *Heb. ii. 1.* *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by Angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received its due recompence, of reward? how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, &c.* Now if these considerations may seem too remote as having equal influence upon all other duties required in the Gospel, we may observe:

3. That our Saviours authority ought to have a more particular force to engage us in the practice of this duty of *Loving Enemies*, because the whole course of his life was a continued example of unbounded goodness and love to those who were his enemies, and he gave us that example that we should follow his steps. Our Sa-

viour in this precept requires nothing more of us, than what he practised towards our selves in a most eminent manner. And can we then be unwilling for his sake to imitate his practice towards our fellow-Creatures? When all flesh had corrupted their ways before God, and become enemies to him through wicked works, and liable to most severe vengeance, then it pleased the Father out of his most tender compassion and love to Mankind to send his Son out of his bosom, to proclaim Pardon and Forgiveness to them who would repent, and turn from the evil of their ways and would believe and obey that Doctrine which he should teach. Then it pleased the Son of God to come down from Heaven, the habitation of Glory, to take upon him our flesh, and to submit to all the miseries and sorrows of humane life; and lastly, to suffer an accursed, ignominious, and painful death, to redeem us from our iniquities, and to free us from the insupportable vengeance which is the wages of them. And can we think of so great condescension of the Son of God, so boundless a compassion and mighty love, without being transported with the
most

most fervent affections of Soul to render to him all possible demonstrations of thankfulness and obedience? Surely no obedience on our parts can be too great a testimony of our thankfulness and love to him, by whose mercy and goodness we are so deeply obliged.

Now the duty of *Loving Enemies* is not onely recommended to our practice by our Saviours authority and example, but is further enjoined as a particular mark and character of his Disciples, and as the great instance of Charity, wherein they should exceed other men. S. Luke vi. 32. *If ye love them which love you, what thank have you? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them, which do good for you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same: and if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good hoping for nothing again.* So then by our Saviours argument, when we do good to friends onely, we do but as other men, and mind onely our interest; but if our charity extends to Enemies, this is pure obedience to the Commands of our Saviour.

then are we properly called his Disciples. To conclude therefore this Argument, if the Will of God sufficiently made known to us have any force to oblige our practice, if the authority and example of the Son of God can prevail with us, if the greatest instance of goodness and love towards our selves can deserve any suitable return from us, then our Saviour may, and doth upon all these accounts challenge your obedience to this precept of *Loving Enemies*, as the peculiar instance of your duty to him, as the best imitation of his charity, and truest testimony of your love and gratitude. Thus if we consider the quality of the Law-giver, he is one, who by the justest authority, and greatest obligations claims obedience to this precept. *I say unto you, love your Enemies, &c.*

2. Besides the authority of the Law-giver, if we consider further the nature of the Law it self, it will appear much more unreasonable we should disobey him. For however uneasie this may seem at the first sight, if we take our measures aright, there is no precept that doth more conduce to the quiet contentment of our own minds, the peace of the World, and the

the true dignity and perfection of our Nature,

1. If we consult onely our present ease and satisfaction, this onely would in a great measure oblige us to pass by many injuries, and to be kind and curteous towards our Brethren, though they have been injurious to us. And this will best appear if we consider, how burdensom and uneasie those passions are which incline to revenge. Anger and Malice, and Envy and Jealousie, which are the constant Attendants of the revengeful man, do raise such boisterous tempests, such tumult and disorder in the soul as cannot consist with true peace and serenity. So that to give way to them, and cherish them in their beginnings, is as dangerous to our repose and happiness, as though we should nourish a Snake in our bosome which would leave behind it an incurable sting and perpetual anguish. Tell me, I pray, is any man happy that is easily provoked? Can he enjoy the same content with other men, who leaves it in the power of any one that dares affront him, to raise in him those tempestuous passions, and to rob him of his repose and quiet? Certainly the angry and
-revengeful

revengeful man, if he hath an enemy,
 gives him the greatest advantages over
 him that can be. For there is no injury
 so effectual, as that which raises distur-
 bance in the mind: so that a malicious
 designer always does the intended mis-
 chief, when it is directed against a man
 that indulgeth these passions. Whereas
 on the contrary, he that inures himself to
 patience and forbearance, though his ad-
 versary seek to do him mischief, yet by
 this temper of mind he frustrates the de-
 sign of his malice, and in spite of all inju-
 ries is perfect Master of his own happi-
 ness. In a word, there is no condition of
 life so happy, no enjoyment so full of sa-
 tisfaction which can give us the least
 content, while the desire of Revenge
 prevails with us. And of this the History
 of *Haman* is abundant evidence, which
 we read *Esther* v. 11. where *Haman* ha-
 ving called his friends and kindred toge-
 ther, and having told them of the great-
 ness of his riches, and the multitude of
 his children, and all the things wherein
 the King had promoted him, and how he
 had advanced him above the Princes and
 Servants of the King, yet saith he, v. 13.
All this availeth me nothing, so long as Mor-
decai

eat the Jew sitteth at the Kings gate. So unhappy is the envious and revengeful man amidst the greatest prosperity which this World can afford.

2. Next to the peace and quiet of our own minds, this duty of forgiving injuries and *loving Enemies* doth highly conduce to the peace of the World, and to the preservation of unity and good will among Christians, as being the most generous and likely way to reduce our enemies to peace and friendly agreement with us. There is no man so averse from reconciliation, who will not in time be wrought upon by kindness and charity. Enmity will of it self expire, if it be not continued by repeated acts of unkindness, how much rather when men find all their injuries repaid with courtesies, all their uncharitable dealings with good deeds. This Argument is made use of by S. Paul, Rom. xii. 20. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink, for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.* Which is not to be understood, as though by so doing we should design to increase his condemnation before God. For though possibly that may be the event, if notwithstanding our kindness
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he continue obstinate in his malice, yet to design that in relieving him would indeed be the cruellest piece of revenge and malice. The Apostles meaning therefore is, that by doing good to our enemy, and relieving him in his wants, we shall kindle in him that fervour of affection and holy fire of Love to us, that he may for the future become our friend, and repent, and be ashamed of his wickedness. This I conceive to be the meaning of *heaping coals of fire upon his head*; and this is confirmed by the following words of the same Apostle, *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* Let no mans injuries or malicious practices towards thee deface in thy Soul that divine temper of mind, that inclines thee to do good; but endeavour rather by repeated acts of charity towards thine enemy to overcome his enmity, and bring him to agreement and peace with thee.

This consideration ought to have great force upon us, because there is nothing more desirable in this World, than that brethren should live together in unity, nor any thing more agreeable to the design of our most holy Religion. When our Sayiour was born into the World
Angels

Angels attended his birth with this song, *Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men.* Our Saviour is often called the *Prince of Peace*, and when he left the World, the last Legacy he bequeathed to his Disciples was Peace: *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* Nor ought any thing to be dearer to us, who pretend to be his Disciples, than this peace; nor ought we to be unwilling to let go much of our right, and to forbear many injuries, and to forego all desires of revenge, so that we may obtain the blessed fruits of peace, and live in unity and godly love.

3. From what hath been already said, it is easie to conclude, that the practice of this duty doth highly conduce to the true dignity and perfection of our Nature. Those good dispositions of mind that encline us to be merciful and friendly to others, are the great perfections of reasonable beings, and we are so much more perfect, by how much more enlarged and extensive they are, and less capable of being removed or changed. And therefore he who is so settled in the habit of doing good, as not to be withdrawn from it by the injuries and provocations of his

enemy

enemy hath gained a victory over himself far beyond what he could hope for in pursuance of his revenge, and hath attained to as great a degree of perfection as he is capable of. For proof of this we may have recourse to the consideration of the divine nature: for the great perfection of Man, was that he was created after the image of God, nor is there any thing whereby we attain a nearer resemblance to the Divine Nature, than by this universal and unrestrained charity, this desire to good to Enemies as well as Friends. That which makes God the most adorable Being in the World, is chiefly his infinite and unchangeable goodness. This reason is assigned by our Saviour to engage us to the duty of *loving Enemies* in the following Verse, *That ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust.* And at the last Verse concludes his discourse with this advice, *Be ye therefore perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

3. The last Argument to persuade us to forgive and love our Enemies was this, that our greatest interest doth indispensably

spensably depend upon this our practice of it. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and do therefore all of us stand in need of pardon and forgiveness at his hands. And can we pray to God for pardon of our own sins, if we refuse for his sake to forgive our Brethren? Surely this were a very vain thing to hope for. For what is there can seem to render our Neighbour incapable of forgiveness, which doth not aggravate our sins against God infinitely beyond his transgressions against us? If our Neighbours offences against us are very many, yet ours against God are vastly more numerous, if not rather without number. *Who can tell how oft he offendeth?* was holy Davids question; and it plainly implies that no man can tell. For his own part, though he was the man after Gods own heart, yet he fairly acknowledges that his sins were more in number than the hairs of his head: and what then must we think of our selves, who come far short of his piety and integrity? Again, are our Neighbours sins against us very hainous and provoking? Ours against God are infinitely more so. And that upon these
two

two accounts, the infinite distance between God and us, the mighty obligations we have received from God. And these are such aggravations of our sins against God, as our Neighbours offences against our selves are not capable of. For as for men they are all but fellow-creatures, and though there is order and superiority amongst them, yet the distance bears no proportion with the infinite and incomprehensible Majesty, whereby God is exalted above the Sons of men. If we also compare the Benefits we receive from God, with what we confer upon one another, even those also bear no resemblance, and therefore cannot aggravate our Neighbours trespasses against us in any proportion with our offences against God.

Let us then consider with our selves, that if our sins against God both for the number and aggravation of them are infinitely greater than the greatest of our Neighbours injuries can be; how unreasonably we demean our selves, if we pray to God for pardon of our sins, while we deny forgiveness to our Brother for the lesser offences we have suffered at his hands. *Do ye as ye would be done by* is the

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common rule of equity. Would you therefore that God should shew mercy to you, be ye also merciful to your fellow-creatures. This is the greatest equity and reason in the World, and God will certainly deal with us according to that rule. So our Saviour tells us, *S. Matt. vi. 14, 15.* *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly father forgive your trespasses.* And elsewhere we are assured that he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy. And now I would beseech the malicious and revengeful man (if he be capable of being calm) to consider with himself, whether he be able to bear those everlasting pains which are reserved for those to whom God refuseth to shew mercy; if he cannot, let him consider further, whether it be not his greatest interest to agree with his adversary quickly, while he is in the way with him; to seek reconciliation with him, to forgive him, pray for him, and do him good, that he also may be capable of that mercy from God which is not attainable by us, unless we from our hearts forgive every man his Brother their trespasses.

James ii.
13.

Now I shall conclude all with the excellent sayings of the son of Syrach, Ecclesi. 28. 1. He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord; and he will surely keep his sin in remembrance. Forgive thy Neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven thee when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? he sheweth no mercy to a man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? If he that is but flesh nourish hatred, who shall intreat for pardon of his sins?

And now I would be-
teach the malicious and revengeful man (if he be capable of being calm) to con- sider with himself, whether he be able to bear those everlasting pains which are reserved for those to whom God refuseth to shew mercy; if he cannot let him con- sider further, whether he be not his great- er enemy, while he is in the way with him- self to seek reconciliation with him, to for- give him, and do him good. That he also may be capable of that mercy from God which is not attainable by us, unless we from our hearts forgive every man his Brother their trespasses.

S E R M.

SERM. II.

1 Cor. iv. part of the 5. verse.

Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.

THe belief of our Saviours second coming, as it hath a general influence upon all the parts of a Christian conversation, so more peculiarly doth it serve to dissuade us from that uncharitable temper so prevailing among men of Judging and Censuring the rest of our Brethren, and is frequently insisted on by our Saviour and his Apostles, as a most effectual and cogent argument against it.

For the better enforcement therefore of this prohibition so frequent in the Gospel, I shall enquire:

I. What that Judgment is, that is here so universally forbidden.

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*Note yt yt. 3^d proposition is plac'd after
yt. first & yt. 2^d in yt. 3^d place*

2. The particular force of the Argument here used to dissuade us from it, *Because the Lord cometh.*

3. I shall shew the great unreasonableness of it.

For the first of these, it is easie to understand that the Judgment here spoken of, is not meant of Judicial proceedings either in matters Civil or Ecclesiastical; and this, if from no other Argument, may appear from the necessity of a Judicial power to the well-being and support of humane society. For that Civil Society cannot subsist in peace and tranquility without sufficient authority residing in some persons above others, to determine controversies between man and man, and to execute punishment upon those that offer violence to their neighbours is too plain to be insisted on.

[For that bad men are vastly more numerous than good, and that such who have no sense of vertue and goodness are no other way to be restrained from evil, but by the severity of wholsom Laws, and the due execution of them; and that this cannot be without judicial authority, every mans experience may convince him.

If therefore we consider that God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Order; and that he designed man for society and mutual support of each other in it, we cannot persuade our selves that any precept of the Gospel can tend to the subversion of it, which the taking away Judicial proceedings would certainly do. Nay, rather since Order and Government is so necessary to our Well-being, we may well conclude that it is derived from God, and from him alone. And agreeably to this the Civil Magistrate is stiled by our Apostle *the Minister of God, a Revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* And we are therefore required to yield obedience to them, not onely for *wrath*, but also for *conscience sake*. Neither is the necessity of a Judicial power less evident in matters Ecclesiastical than in Civil: nor is the danger of Confusion and Disorder greater in the State than in the Church. Therefore when our Saviour sent forth his Disciples to gather to him a Church, and make Disciples of all Nations, he intrusted them with the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, with the power of censuring and absolving, of remitting and

Rom. xiii.
4, 5.

retaining sins, agreeable to the demerits of persons under their jurisdiction; and in obedience to this Commission, the Scripture gives us several instances of the use and exercise of this power. By this authority *S. Paul* did deliver *Hymeneus and Alexander unto Satan, that they might learn to blaspheme*: as we read *1 Tim. i. 20.* and in the *5. chapter* of this Epistle, verse *5.* he gives directions to the Church of *Corinth* to use the same power over such persons as were notorious, *to deliver such unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* The Judgment therefore here and elsewhere so frequently forbidden, cannot be meant of the Judgment of authority in matter either Civil or Ecclesiastical.

72. Neither are we forbidden all kind of judgment of the persons of men from their outward and visible practices; though we have no superiority over them, we are still allowed the judgment of discretion, to distinguish between man and man, to know whom to avoid and whom to associate our selves with, and it is a great part of Christian prudence so to do. The actions of many men are so plain

plain and notorious, that they are not capable of a mild and easie interpretation; and should we stay till publick authority had set a mark upon such persons, before we provide for our own innocence and security by forsaking their acquaintance and conversation, we may in time grow partakers in their iniquity, and be defiled by them. Bad Company and Example do insensibly prevail upon our minds, and betray us into evil, and unless we were allowed to make a judgment of some persons from the actions we see, we could have no reason to stand upon our guard, or beware of them. Nay further, Christian Charity it self, which obligeth us against all rash and malicious censures of other men, doth in many cases not onely allow, but exact of us to make a judgment of, and be jealous over them, that we be able to afford to them seasonable reproof and admonition, before they are confirmed in a habit of sin. And to this kind of Judgment, if it be exercised with true charity and moderation, out of a zealous concern for the soul of our offending Brother, there is a reward annexed, S. James v. 19. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert*

him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the evil of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. Now we should be excluded both from this duty and blessing, if it were not lawful to judge of men in some measure by what we hear and see.

3. We are not forbidden to judge and pass censure upon our selves: For this is elsewhere made our duty, and prescribed to us as a great means to escape the Judgement of God. For this S. Paul tells us, 1 Cor. xi. 31. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged.* And the reason is plain: For would men find leisure seriously to examine their own lives and actions, and to judge impartially of them, they would not then so freely indulge themselves in those practices to which they know the judgement of God is due. They would think themselves obliged in all times and places, to a more strict and circumspect walking with God; and when they have through inadvertency and neglect yielded to temptation, by a due examination and judging of themselves, they would be convinced of the necessity of an hearty and sincere repentance, before they go hence and be no more seen.

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The power of Conscience was given us by God for that end, that we might be enabled to judge of the good and evil of our actions, and be thereby more vigorously engaged to continue in well-doing, and eschew evil, upon a prospect of a future and more dreadful judgment that would otherwise ensue. When therefore S. Paul tells us *verse 3.* that he judged not his own self. This is not to be understood as though he made no judgment at all of his own life and actions, and particularly of his discharge of his Apostolick Office mentioned in the former Verses; but that he was not finally to rely upon his own judgment, but that *although he knew nothing of himself,* as he declares *Verse 4.* yet he was not *thereby justified,* in as much as he was afterward to be judged by the supreme Judge of all the Earth, who knew better how he had behaved himself, and would judge more impartially than he himself could; and then immediately subjoins the prohibition of the Text, *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.* 7

These things therefore being excepted from the general prohibition, the sin which

which is here forbidden, is the uncharitable practice of censuring and condemning other men without any probable or just grounds, when men take occasion from little circumstances and appearances to judge the person of their Neighbour, and the inward thoughts and inclinations of his heart. When they take up an ill opinion of him from every idle report, and stick not to spread and divulge the same to his prejudice. When they take all occasions to lessen and detract from the good he doth, and aggravate the evil. This unchristian practice is capable of many degrees and aggravations, which I shall not insist on particularly. I shall only take notice in general, that whoever will consider calmly with himself how he would have his Neighbour deal with him in the like matter, with what candour and simplicity he would have him judge of the outward circumstances of his life, how loth he would be to have the worst interpretation made of all his words and actions, and how willing he would have others be to admit his excuses, if not to take away, yet at least to lessen and alleviate the guilt of any miscarriages; such a one cannot but understand

stand what those degrees of uncharitable judgment are, which are here forbidden. I proceed therefore to the second thing propounded, to shew the great unreasonableness of this practice, and this will appear from these three considerations:

1. From the baseness of its original.
2. From the greatness of the injury done to the person we censure unjustly.
3. From the mischief which redounds to the Publick by uncharitable judgment of one another.

1. For the original of this practice of censuring and reviling one another, I think it may ordinarily be resolved into one of these three Principles.

1. Secret pride and over-valuing our selves. Men, who are destitute of real worth and yet have a mighty opinion of themselves, have no other means to buoy up themselves in that conceit, but to pick faults in the life and actions of other men. And this I doubt is the humour of too many pretenders to the strictness of Religion; who, if they declare a great abhorrence of some particular fault of their Neighbours, which is contrary to
their

their own natural inclination or present interest, are apt vainly to please themselves with the opinion of their own righteousness, and to vaunt it in the language of the *Pharisee*, *Luke xviii. 10.* *God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.* Now the unreasonable folly of this method of proceeding, no man can be ignorant of, that considers the nature and genius of true Religion; that it doth not consist in the abstinence from some particular sins, which I may apprehend others to be guilty of, but in an universal obedience to all the commands of God. And therefore what advantageth it me to be able to declaim zealously against this or that Vice of the Age I live in, or the persons with whom I converse, if I cherish in my bosom other impieties, which, if not so open and notorious, may yet be as inconsistent with my salvation as any other. If we will take our Saviours judgment in the case, the poor Publican, though conscious of so many faults and infirmities, and already judged and condemned by the *Pharisee*, was yet in a much fairer way to be justified before God, than the other, who
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did not seem to apprehend that he needed any repentance. Now were men truly humble and conscious of their own manifold defects and miscarriages, they would find infinite more reason to turn the edge of their censure upon themselves. There is no man who will take pains to search into the secrets of his own soul, but may find himself guilty of more faults than he can reasonably suspect or accuse his Neighbour of. We see onely the external gesture and behaviour of other men, and cannot easily determine from what principle their actions flow: we do not know all the circumstances they are engaged in, which will much alter the nature of the actions we judge them for. We cannot tell what we ourselves should do in the like case, and how far we may be able to resist the same temptations. Whereas we may easily know the true grounds of our own miscarriages, that the blame of them is due onely to our selves. So that every man hath upon this account much greater reason to think and speak well of other men, than of himself. But now if notwithstanding this evidence, men may have of their own guiltiness above that of their Neighbours,

hours, they can give themselves the liberty zealously to declaim against the supposed faults of other men, this must needs argue an unreasonable degree of self-conceit; and proud overlooking those imperfections and follies which may be found at home in their own bosome.

2. A further ground of this uncharitable practice, is Idleness, and a gross neglect of our own necessary affairs. The business of our own salvation is of so near and great concern to us, that unless we be very negligent of it, we cannot find leisure to pry into, and condemn the miscarriages of others. Our life here is short enough to fit and prepare us for that unalterable state which we are hastening to; and can we think it reasonable to spend any of those precious hours which are never to be recalled, in a business of so little concern to us, as the faults and follies of other men: especially when they may be employed to so great advantage in furthering our journey, and facilitating our admission to that glorious Kingdom which we all pretend to seek after? Surely did men seriously consider, that their title to an eternal and never-fading inheritance did depend upon the wise manage-

management of a few days here, that the very best of mankind, when they had done all they could, were but unprofitable servants, and that our future condition would be determined, not according to other mens actions, but our own, they would think it much more reasonable to spend that leisure they had in the search and examination of their own souls, while there is room left to repent and amend, lest while they are impertinently busy in inquiring into, and censuring the actions of other men, they themselves should be surprised by the evil day, and snatched away unprepared to the great Tribunal. Every mans own business therefore being of so great and weighty a concern, he that is really mindful of it, can have no further leisure to observe the failings and miscarriages of other men, than to take occasion from thence to exercise that great part of Christian charity, which consists in friendly reproof and admonition where it may be given; and when it may not, to take heed to himself, lest he also be tempted; and if any man suffer himself to be transported beyond these bounds, to censure and condemn other men, he justly deserves

serves the reproof in the Comedy :

*Tantumne ab re tua est otii tibi,
Aliena ut cures, eaque nihil que ad te at-
tinent ?*

3. A further occasion of uncharitable censures, is Interest and Design. When men make the disreputation of other men the step to their own advancement in the World; and of this the experience is too manifest: this being a disease that widely spreads itself among all sorts and conditions of men. How seldom do we see any matter of interest decided without many hard speeches, and unjust censures of the persons we contend with? How apt are men to take advantage of every little circumstance of anothers life that is capable of an ill interpretation, when it may suit their interest to disparage him? There is a sort of politick and designing men in the World, who can converse familiarly, and speak friendly to their Neighbour, and be lavish in his praises, till a competition of Interest happen between them; but then all his good deeds had some sinister design blended with them: they can then discover many

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circumstances which are apt to create suspicion, and those suspicions are soon spread with so much aggravation, as though the suspected faults were real and evident: and when they have said the utmost they can to lessen his esteem, they can still express a great tenderness for the reputation of the man, and that they are loth to say or think the worst of him.

Besides the greatness of the injury, and other bad effects of this way of proceeding, which I shall have occasion to insist on more particularly, that which I shall at present take notice of, to shew the great unreasonableness of it, is this, that none but bad men and a bad cause can stand in need of it. He that pursues his own interest and advancement for no other ends but such as are just and reasonable, *viz.* that he may be able with more freedom to discharge his duty toward God and Man, and be in better capacity to do good in the World. Such a one will consider, that there is no such great need of his advancement in the World, but that another man in the same state and condition may discharge the offices of that state as well as he. And in

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the mean time he may satisfy himself, that the duties he performs in a lower sphere, are as acceptable to God, and less distracting to himself, than if he were raised higher: and then what temptation can such a man have to exalt himself with so great an injury done to another man? And this leads me to the second thing propounded, to shew the unreasonableness of uncharitable judgment of our brethren, from the greatness of the injury we do by it.

1. It is an injury against which there is no defence. He that assaults a man by open violence, may be restrained by the use of our own power against his; besides the publick authority of Laws provide for our security, and men are naturally inclined to assist and succour the weak against the violence of an oppressor: but the tongue of the malicious and censorious woundeth in secret, and it is hard to know from whence our harm issueth. A slanderous report spreads widely and insensibly; nor can a man be able to trace out the beginnings, or stop the progress of it. Nay many times the slander is improved beyond the intentions of him that devised it. If but a bare suspicion

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S E R M O N II.

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be put in the minds of the giddy and credulous multitude, how easily doth it gain credit as true? and then suddenly a thousand circumstances are added to aggravate the guilt; so that it is not in the power of the greatest wisdom or virtue to resist wholly, or stop the progress of a false accusation.

2. The greatness of this injury will appear yet more manifestly in that we cannot make sufficient reparation for it. He that hath been the Author of a false report, though he should afterwards repent and be sorry for it, though he should ask forgiveness of the person injured, and take all occasions for the future to wipe off all suspicions which himself had raised; yet after all is done, much of the report will be believed whether he will or not. It may be spread through many places, wherein after-confession cannot reach; and even then men are apter to believe the bad report than the good. Men will not lay aside a prejudice once entertained, without greater evidence to the contrary, than what caused it at first; and such evidence it will be hard to give to all persons who have believed a slander. A malicious censure may meet with

many persons who may think it their interest to continue the belief of it, though the first inventor should repent. So that when once an uncharitable judgment is made and divulged, I cannot see how it can be in the power of him that did it, to stop the belief, or spreading of it, or to make reparation.

3. A further aggravation of this sin is, that no kind of injury doth more afflict the spirit of a man, or make a deeper impression than a false and uncharitable judgment of him. Every man hath naturally a great reverence for a good name; and agreeably to his value of it, cannot but highly resent to be deprived of it by a false and unjust accusation. And therefore Solomon compares the words of a slanderer and back-biter to the piercing of a sword, *Prov. xi. 18.* And holy David tells us that *swords are in their lips, Psal. lix. 7.* Neither is it without good reason that men are thus tender of their reputation and good name, in as much as it is one of the great instruments whereby men are enabled to do good in the World; and to be disabled from that, is one of the most just occasions of grief and dissatisfaction.

A man, who out of conscience towards God, makes it his sincere endeavour to do what good he can in the place and station to which God hath called him, cannot but be deeply affected with such an injury, as makes his endeavours ineffectual for that end; and though he may be so charitable as to forgive, yet it cannot but cause a great uneasiness of spirit in a good man, which cannot easily be attoned for. But this is not a private injury onely, but hath very great and malignant influence upon the society in which we live. Which brings me to the third consideration proposed, to shew the great unreasonableness of uncharitable judging of one another; namely the bad effects which redound from this practice to the Publick.

1. The first of those bad effects, which I shall insist on, is that which I just now mentioned, that it renders particular persons less able to do good in their several places and callings, than otherwise they might be. And this must needs be a great injury to the Publick, proportionably to the several abilities and degrees of the persons so dealt with. Now that slanderous reports and false judg-

ments spread concerning the persons of any men, do tend much to hinder the good they might do otherwise, I shall endeavour to prove by instancing in two sorts of men, whose ability to do good, doth in great measure depend upon the reverence and esteem of their persons, which must consequently be much lessened by malicious and uncharitable censures of them; and even by the undue mention of faults that are true and real, but yet are no mans business to enquire into, or accuse them for.

The persons I mean, are publick Ministers either in the Church or State. For the latter of these it is a thing of common experience, that the great strength and security of any Nation consists in the unity and good correspondence between the several parts of it: when those that govern apply themselves zealously for the good of the Community; and when Subjects on the other hand are hearty and sincere in their obedience to those that rule over them. Now it must needs be granted, that nothing more effectually engages the obedience and affection of Subjects to their Sovereign and Ministers employed by him, than a firm belief of their

their wisdom and integrity in the management of their respective employments. Whoever therefore makes it their design, as many busie-bodies are apt to do, to mis-represent all the proceedings of their Governours, that suit not with their present humour and understanding, and to rip up and aggravate those private faults of such persons which concern them not : such persons, I say, cannot but be thought highly injurious to the Publick, by abating the reverence and esteem, which is justly due and of great use to superiours in the execution of the great trust committed to them. But in the name of God, what do men of this temper propose to themselves? Do they think their Governours are not men of Passion and Infirmities as well as others? Do they not know that the employments they are engaged in, are of more variety and difficulty, than can be managed with so exact evenness, but there will be still some inconveniences unavoidable? How is it that they do not observe, that even then when they complain of, and censure the persons and actions of their Governours, they do in a great measure contribute to, and increase

the inconveniences they suffer. For it is vain to imagine that inconveniences of any Government arise wholly or chiefly from the faults and miscarriages of men in authority, but in great part from the perverse and ungovernable tempers of some men, who study to be unquiet, and for that reason stick not to declaim zealously against all the actions of their superiours, which they think capable of blame.

2. The second sort of persons, whose abilities to do good, depend much upon the reverence and esteem of their persons, are the Ministers of the Church. Now the business of these men being of so great importance, as the salvation of the immortal spirits of men; whoever hinders the success of their endeavours in that affair, may justly be esteemed a common enemy to mankind. Now I do not understand any way whereby men do more directly undermine the Authority of our holy Faith, and hinder the enlargement of it, than by defaming the persons to whom the delivery of the Sacred Oracles, and the Ministry of Reconciliation is intrusted. For though it be a very unsafe and unreasonable way of
arguing,

arguing, for any man to disbelieve the truth of Christian Religion, and to neglect the practice of it, because this or that particular man in Holy Orders is unfaithful to his own soul, and lives not up to the purity and perfection which he preacheth to others; yet certainly it is an argument which doth extremely prevail in the World, and is equally dangerous, whether it be grounded on the real, or but supposed faults of men, whose Office it is to instruct or persuade others to the practice of holiness. For to him who believes a false report of his spiritual Guide, the occasion of Scandal is as effectual, as though the report were true, and the censure just: and then who can persuade himself that the man who raised the false accusation is not as injurious to the Church, as the man whose life is really scandalous? What hath been said of the ill effect that redounds to the Publick from the uncharitable censurings of men of this publick capacity, will in proportion hold concerning the rash judgments we make of private persons, according to the several degrees wherein they may be useful either in the Church or Commonwealth.

2. I proceed to a second instance of the ill effects which redound to the publick by our uncharitable judging one another; namely, that our rash and censorious practice towards others, provokes the like usage from them towards our selves; and thence arises those many feuds and animosities, mutual revilings, and bitter envyings, so visible among men of all conditions; and a feud thus begun, commonly spreads it self, and all our friends and correspondents are soon made partners in the quarrel; and how hard it is to lay aside or allay those animosities which have been thus begun, every mans experience may convince him. Now I need not use any arguments to shew that divisions and animosities among men, are of very dangerous consequence to the publick Society where they live; it being a truth attested by the common consent of Mankind, and by the experience of all Ages; so that we must needs conclude, that whatever practices tend to the begetting and increase of strife and contention, are very hurtful to the Publick.

Nor do I know any practice that doth more effectually tend that way, than this

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of uncharitable judging and censuring other men. How much the greater the end and design of any Society is, so much more dangerous and hurtful those practices are to be esteemed which cause divisions in it. The Church of God therefore being a Society, whose happiness is not terminated in the temporal peace and tranquillity of this life, we must needs conclude that those uncharitable censures which cause divisions among Christians, receive from hence a mighty aggravation in that they do not onely hinder their present peace and tranquillity, but endanger their falling short of that eternal salvation, which is promised to none that do not follow after peace and holiness. And from this consideration that we are all members of the Church of Christ, I cannot but add a third ill effect which this uncharitable practice of judging and censuring one another brings to the Publick.

3. *Viz.* That it brings reproach upon our Christian Profession, and upon that Holy Name whereby we are called. For suppose a Jew or a Pagan should peruse the writings of the holy Evangelists and Apostles, and should read there the many pre-

precepts which require of us the greatest degree of meekness and humility in our opinions and judgments of other men; should they read *S. Pauls* description of Christian Charity, that it *thinketh no evil*, that it *believeth all things*, and *hopeth all things*; did they consider the many arguments the Gospel uses to enforce the duty, and great reward undispensably depending upon our practice; and lastly the example of our Saviour himself, who in his conversation among men, was the greatest enemy to all uncharitable judgment of others, but did himself exercise the greatest candor towards all men, scarce ever passing a severe censure upon any; but that proud censorious Sect of the Pharisees, who made themselves judges of all others: should they then descend to compare the practice of Christians with that excellent rule they pretend to, and with the example of their Lord and Saviour, and see how vast the disproportion is between our Practice and Profession, they would easily persuade themselves that the generality of Christians did not seriously believe the Doctrine they vaunt of, nor own the authority of their Saviour in giving Laws for the Government

vernment of their lives, nor expect the accomplishment of those things which he hath foretold. They will find it very hard to reconcile, how the belief of those things can consist with many uncharitable practices, unjust reproaches, and mutual enmities which the professing Disciples of the blessed Jesus are so easily tempted to. Thus, besides the injury we do to particular persons, and to the publick Society whereof we should be feeling members, we cast a stumbling block in the way of those who might be won over to our most holy Profession, did they not see the Professors of it so manifestly contradict in their lives and practices, what they plead for with so much zeal and affection.

I proceed to the third thing propounded, to shew the particular force of the argument here used to dissuade from uncharitable judging one another: *Because the Lord cometh.* And this will appear,

1. From the consideration of his infinite knowledge, if compared with our great inability to judge aright. This branch of the argument is particularly urged by our Apostle in the words following

lowing my Text; *Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden works, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God.*

The good and evil of what men do, cannot be determined barely from outward appearances, which onely are exposed to the knowledge of men. Many actions may proceed from an heart truly pious and devout, which may be acceptable to God that knows the heart, which yet as to men may be liable to suspicion and mistake. On the other side the outward actions of hypocrites may appear to men as instances of great piety and devotion, when to God they are an abomination. Now should we use the utmost of our discretion in these cases, we could have no sufficient ground to judge rightly of these men or their actions. So many are the secret windings and private retirements of the heart of man; so various his thoughts and intentions, and so numerous his pretences to disguise his actions, that it is not in the power of any mortal eye, though never so impartial, to discern rightly of him or his actions. Besides, there are few men so impartial in
their

their judgment as to take in all circumstances even of outward appearance, we too frequently pass censure according to our own preconceived opinions and prejudices, and are often biased by our zeal, interests or affections, which do usually as much mis-represent persons and actions to our understanding, as coloured Mediums do objects to the eye. Thence arises the great difference between the several judgments men make of the same things. Nay, so deceitful is the heart of man, so hardly to be searched into, that we are not competent Judges of our own actions. We have many arts to deceive our selves, many secret evasions and false pretences to beget an opinion of our own worth and righteousness, and to hide our selves, if I may so say, from our own souls, and then how can we hope to make a right judgment of other men? But now the Lord, who is to come, is of infinite knowledge, and 'tis his Prerogative alone to understand the thoughts of man, and the counsels of his heart.

This God testifieth of himself, Jer. xvii. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I trie the reins,*

reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. Again, Prov. xxiv. 12. If thou sayest, behold we knew it not, doth not he which pondereth the heart consider it, and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? The all-seeing eye of God can discern those inwards acts of piety which a good man is employed in, though they meet with censure and reproach among men; and can as easily unmask all the false pretences of the Hypocrite, since all things are naked and open before him. Now the consequences of these considerations to dissuade us from judging before the time is easie and obvious. For what more reasonable motive to restrain our curiosity in prying into, and censuring the actions of others, than that the exact knowledge of those things is too wonderful for us, and that we cannot attain to it; and withall that there is a judgment to come, when, if we make a false and uncharitable judgment, we shall be plainly convinced of it before God and all his holy Angels, and then who can persuade himself, that it will not be a matter of great shame and confusion of face, to see those men, whom we had unjustly

justly censured and reviled, receive praise from the unerring judgment of God, and for those very actions which we here condemned, made partakers of the reward of Righteousness, the Crown of Glory and Immortality.

2. A further consideration to dissuade from all uncharitable judgment is, that the Lord, who is to come, and he alone, hath power and authority to judge. That Lord, whose Creatures we are, and on whom we depend daily for our support and well-being, hath onely absolute right and dominion over us: and except in those cases where he hath delegated his authority to Princes, Parents, and other Governours to judge of, and determine those outward actions that concern Society, he hath reserved the power of giving Laws to mankind, and of judging according to them to himself onely. And therefore, besides the presumption which while we judge others we are guilty of our selves, by boldly intruding into those things which we know not, we do with all sacrilegiously invade the royal Prerogative of God, to whom alone judgment belongeth. This is St. James's argument, James iv. 12, *There is one Law-giver able*

to save and to destroy, who art thou that judgest another? And S. Paul to the same purpose, Rom. xiv. 4. Who art thou that judgest anothers servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth.

But to conclude. Thirdly and lastly, we ought not to judge before the time, because the Lord cometh, who will be the severe avenger of all uncharitable judgment of our brethren. This he himself assures us, S. Matt. vii. 1, 2. *Judge not that you be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* And from this ground S. Paul argues, Rom. ii. 1. *Therefore thou inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest dost the same things.* Verse the third. *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and dost the same, that thou shouldest escape the judgment of God.* Now I conceive the Apostles Argument is equally cogent, whether he be understood here to speak of the same sins in specie, or rather of other sins of equal guilt. Since the unreasonableness of judging our Neighbour for some particular
sins

sins, when we are guilty of others as heinous, is altogether as evident as though we did the same things we condemn him for. And therefore *S. Paul* himself in the latter part of that Chapter, when he pursues the same argument makes his instances not only in sins of the same kind, but of equal degree, Verse 22. *Thou that abhorrest Idols, committest thou Sacrilege?* And now let any man consider how dreadful his condition must needs be at the judgment of the great day, if the Lord who is to come should be extreme to mark what he hath done amiss, and should deal with him according to the utmost rigour of the Law, and then he cannot want sufficient arguments to persuade him to a meek and candid interpretation of the faults of others, especially if he call to mind that God hath declared, that *he shall have judgment without mercy, which hath shewed no mercy*: which shewing of mercy doth not consist barely in the relieving the wants of those that are in misery, but in an universal charity, as well in our thoughts and judgments of others, and in an humble forbearance of their faults and infirmities, as in other acts of bounty and liberality.

It remains now since we all believe, and are assured that our Lord will certainly come to judge the World, that we behave our selves as men that wait for his coming; as by all other Exercises of Holy Living, so more particularly by Meekness and Charity towards others: that laying aside all rash and uncharitable censures of other men, we may be in some measure capable of receiving the promise of our Saviour, *Luke vi. 37. Judge not and ye shall not be judged: condemn not and ye shall not be condemned.*

SERM.

S E R M. III.

JOHN vij. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.

HE that considers with himself the great variety of Opinions in matters of Religion, which have prevailed in the Christian World, and the great zeal and animosities wherewith men of different persuasions are wont to maintain the distinguishing opinions of their Party, scarce allowing those that differ from them any probable hopes of salvation. He that considers this, must necessarily suppose one of these two things:

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Either

Either that the way of obtaining the knowledge of divine truth is not sufficiently plain and certain, so that all that use a due diligence in the search after it, may reasonably hope to obtain it.

Or secondly, that the generality of Christians that maintain so wide differences about matters of Religion, do not seek for knowledge after a right manner.

The former of these, *viz.* that the way of salvation is not sufficiently plain, and that all, who use a due diligence in the search of it, may not reasonably hope to find it; this cannot be granted without injury and affront to the divine goodness and justice. For since the eternal welfare of all Christians doth depend upon their due performance of the condition of Christianity, and this cannot be performed without a competent knowledge of those things that are revealed in the Gospel; if these things were so dark and obscure, that even the plainest Christian might not attain to as great a degree of knowledge as is necessary for him, it would then follow, that God had not taken sufficient care of his people, to make the way of salvation known to them;

S E R M O N . III.

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them: and withall that he dealt very hardly and unmercifully with the greatest part of them, in excluding them from the means of knowledge, when yet he hath annexed so great a penakty to the want of it, as their falling short of that eternal inheritance to which they are called in the Gospel.

The true reason therefore why so many enquirers after knowledge do miscarry in their design, and are led away into strange and dangerous opinions, is not because the knowledge of the truth is so hard to be obtained, but because there are but few that apply themselves to the search of it after a due manner. It cannot therefore but seem necessary, that while we all pretend to seek after knowledge, and to desire to be informed in those important truths revealed in the Gospel, that we first of all endeavour to satisfy our selves concerning the true way and method, by which the knowledge we seek after is to be obtained: and this our Saviour hath directed us to in these words, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.*

In the fore-going Verses of this Chapter

pter we read that there was *great murmur-
 ing among the people* concerning our Sa-
 viour, who about that time begun to
 shew himself to *Israel*; and there was
 great variety of opinions concerning
 him. *Some said, he is a good man, others
 said, nay; but he deceiveth the people.*
 Now to decide this controverſie concern-
 ing himself, and the doctrine he taught,
 he gives them this plain direction, *if any
 man will do his will*; intimating thereby,
 that they who thus disputed concerning
 him, had not that true frame of mind that
 was fit for his reception: that they were
 not willing to obey God, whatever they
 pretended, and therefore that it was in
 vain for them to be so inquisitive about
 him. For to what purpose should they
 look for further revelations and instru-
 ctions from God, when they refused obe-
 dience to that doctrine they had already
 received, and which they knew to be
 divine? For to this purpose he upbraids
 them, *v. 19. Did not Moses give you the
 Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law?*
 So then, had the Jews been obedient ob-
 servers of the Law, as they pretended
 great admiration of it, they could not
 have found so many difficulties in their
 owning

owning our Saviour for the true Messias, they would then easily have understood that he came from God, and that the doctrine he taught was truly divine and heavenly, and that he did not endeavour to destroy the Law and the Prophets, as they were wont to object against him, but that he did eminently and exactly fulfil them.

But not to insist on this strict connection of the words with the foregoing and following Verses, I shall now consider them, not as having any peculiar respect to the Jews, but as they are a general rule for all enquirers after divine truth: *If any man, whosever he be, Jew or Gentile, will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

In handling of these words, I shall first endeavour to explain the nature of the condition, which our Saviour here requires in order to the search of divine truth.

2. I shall shew the certainty of success to all such as seek for knowledge after this manner here required.

1. For the condition it self, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether*

whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self. This condition implies in it these four things:

I. A previous sense of the divine Sovereignty over us, and our obligation to do whatsoever God commands. This belief of the Supreme Authority of God, is antecedently necessary to all enquiries after divine truth. For he that would be satisfied concerning the truth of any particular kind of Religion, must in the first place suppose that some religious worship is due from men to God; and this is of so natural an evidence and obligation, that there neither is, nor hath been any Nation of the World, wherein they have not had a sense of the Being of God, and of his supreme right to give Laws to Mankind; and that our well-being and happiness doth depend upon our doing those things which are well-pleasing to him; and therefore we find, that how far soever the Nations of the World had erred concerning the Nature of God, oft-times attributing to him those unworthy passions and practices which a wise man would be ashamed of; yet still they thought it necessary to find out some way of expressing their homage to him.

And

And though the ways of Worship devised by the Heathens were commonly very absurd and ridiculous, yet thus much is abundantly evident from their practice, that they owned an obligation to a religious worship of God, and had a sense of his sovereignty and right to govern them, and to dispose of them as he pleaseth.

And this sense of his divine Sovereignty is necessarily supposed in this condition, *If any man will do his will.* For no man can intend to do the will of God, who is not before persuaded that he ought to do it, whensoever it is made known to him.

2. This condition, *if any man will do his will*, implies or presupposes a serious desire to know the will of God in order to practice, and a diligent use of those means of instruction which God hath afforded us: as *viz.* a search of the Scripture, a sober use of our Reason in the examination of it, a diligent attendance on those spiritual Guides which God hath set over us for our instruction in the way of righteousness; and prayer to God for the guidance and assistance of his good Spirit, to enable us to understand and do those

those things which are necessary for us, and to lead us into all truth. For we are not to understand this promise of our Saviour, as though God would infuse the knowledge of divine truth by a miracle; but that those that will do the will of God, shall be blest by him in the diligent use of those ordinary means which he hath appointed for their instruction. And therefore in the old Oeconomy the Jews were referred to Moses for their instruction, what they ought to do. And under the Gospel, God hath given some Apostles, some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and to these men and their successors we must have recourse in order to instruction, and satisfaction in matters of Religion. To these themselves we may have recourse in the Books of the New Testament, which they have left behind them as a certain guide to us in all things necessary, if we be not wanting to our selves. To their Successors we have recourse in our attendance upon the publick Ministry, who derive their commission by a continued succession from the Apostles, who

who were impowered by Christ to ordain others, for the continuance of their Office to the end of the World. And to these persons thus impowered all private Christians ought to apply themselves with humility and diligence for their instruction; and in the diligent use of those means of knowledge above-mentioned, he that *will do the will of God*, by vertue of this promise of our Saviour, *shall know of the doctrine.*

3. This condition, *if any man will do his will*, implies further, that in our search after divine truth, and in our use of those means of knowledge which God hath afforded us, we must propose to our selves the doing the will of God, as the ultimate end of our knowledge.

This is that which is more particularly expressed in the Text. Many there are, who are very inquisitive after truth, but they have oft-times very different and undue ends in their enquiry: sometimes they do it to gratifie their curiosity; sometimes that they may be able to maintain their Party they are engaged in, with some plausible shew of reason; sometimes they do it for ostentation and vain-glory, that they may appear wiser and
more

more learned than their neighbours; and sometimes they seek for knowledge, as other men do their Merchandise, that they may make a gain of it, and provide for their subsistence in the World. Now all these several sorts of Enquirers may possibly attain the several ends they propose to themselves; they may grow learned and wise in the ordinary account of men, they may grow rich, and gain esteem and applause among men; and in this they have their reward; but still they may want the true knowledge and satisfaction which our Saviour here speaks of; which is not attainable by any that do not intend and resolve to do the will of God according to their knowledge; this alone makes them capable of a full and sensible conviction of the divine authority and excellency of those revelations which are contained in the Gospel. For it is not every one that can talk superficially about religious matters, or that can give a tolerable account of the rational grounds, upon which the truth of the Gospel is conveyed to us; not every one that can dispute learnedly about points of Faith, and decide Controversies; not every one that is thus accomplished, is properly

properly said *to know of the doctrine* in our Saviours sense. No, he that is resolved *to do the will of God* absolutely and entirely, such a one shall receive a more full and ample satisfaction concerning those things that are necessary for him, than can be gained by the strongest reasonings, and most convincing demonstrations. He shall find in his soul a lively sense of the excellency of those truths which the Gospel delivers, such as shall leave no room for doubtfulness or disputing.

4. We must not onely intend and resolve to do the will of God, and propose to our selves this, as the great end of our enquiry; but we must actually endeavour to discharge those duties we already know, if we hope to attain to a sufficient satisfaction in our Religion: for he that neglects to do the will of God, as far as he already knows, he cannot be presumed to have a sincere resolution of submitting to those further instructions which he may find in the Gospel. And indeed, in this place our Saviour may well be understood to exact this qualification of those who came to hear him, that they should practise those duties they already knew,

knew, if they would be satisfied concerning the truth of his Religion; for otherwise it may seem an improper and preposterous way of proceeding, to persuade men first to obey the Gospel, and then to promise them satisfaction about the truth of it. Men are not willing to enter upon a way of living so strict and severe as the Gospel enjoins, without being satisfied before hand of the truth of it; that that is truly the will of God, which is there required, and that it is their great duty and interest to obey it. Nay it is manifest by sad experience, that many who are convinced of the truth of the Gospel, are yet very backward to practise the precepts of it; but how much more unwillingly would they undertake this practice, if they were not capable of satisfaction about the truth of the Gospel, till they had obeyed it. So that it is most reasonable to suppose, that the doing the will of God here spoken of, must in part be understood of those previous instructions in the will of God, which those who came to hear our Saviour had before received.

The Jews, to whom our Saviour here directs his discourse, had the instructions
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of *Moses* and the Prophets; from whom they might have understood the principal rules of good living; and their obedience to *Moses* and the Prophets would doubtless have been a great preparation for their reception of the Gospel; and then for those Enquirers after truth, who have been bred up in a Christian Commonwealth, they cannot be supposed to be wholly ignorant of their duty. No man can ordinarily grow up in a Christian Society to an age capable of such enquiries, but must have been competently instructed in the general rules of good living, in the substantial and necessary parts of Religion. Those three great branches of Duty which *S. Paul* teaches us to be the summe of the Gospel, the *living righteously, soberly, and godly in the World*, are in themselves of so evident an obligation, that no man who hath come to the use of Reason, especially in a Christian Commonwealth, can be ignorant that it is his duty to live so. Suppose we then a man competently instructed in the general rules of good living, whether by the Law of Nature written in his mind or conscience, as was the case of the better sort of Heathens, or by the

Law of *Moses*, as the Jews were in our Saviours time.

Orlastly, by the benefit of a Christian education, as the state of thole among ourselves is, who come to examine the truth of the Gospel, and to enquire more nearly into the sense of it. Suppose we a man already instructed by any of these means in the fundamental rules of practice, desirous of further knowledge and satisfaction in the doctrine of the Gospel, he must be careful to live up to those principles he is already instructed in, resolving also to submit obediently to whatsoever else, upon his further enquiry, he shall find to be his duty. Such a man thus prepared by doing his duty, and thus resolved to do the will of God, as far as it shall be made known to him, such a one is the person to whom this promise of our Savior doth belong. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.*

I proceed to the second thing propounded, to shew the certainty of success to those that seek for knowledge with this preparation; and here it will not be amiss to consider briefly in what sense this promise is to be understood, before

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we undertake to prove the certainty of it. We are to observe therefore, that this promise of our Saviour is not to be understood so universally, as though no man, who was sincerely resolved to obey God, shall fall into any kind of errors in matters of Religion. For this is contradicted by the constant experience of all Ages: for it would be very uncharitable to suppose, that among most of the dissenting parties in Religion, who maintain great controversies with one another, there should not be some persons truly devout and sincere on both sides. We are not therefore to suppose that a man truly religious shall not err at all; but that he shall not be led into such errors as are dangerous to, or inconsistent with his salvation. And indeed the promise in this place is not set down in so general terms, as that they should seem to require any larger interpretation than this I am speaking of; *If any man will do his will, saith our Saviour, he shall know of the doctrine, I now deliver to you, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.* Which cannot reasonably be extended beyond these two things.

1. He shall receive satisfaction con-

cerning the truth of Christian Religion in general, that it is a doctrine truly divine and heavenly, and that the author of it came from God, and delivered his mind and will.

2. *He that will do the will of God shall be satisfied also, concerning those particular truths, which are indispensably necessary for him to know, in order to his salvation.*

These two things will be the undoubted effects of a religious frame of mind; of a sincere resolution to do the will of God, and will certainly be made good to all, who seek for knowledge with that preparation; and this we have great reason to be assured of, whether we consider:

1. The natural influence that a religious temper of mind hath upon the understanding, to make it fit for the reception of divine truth.

2. The peculiar blessing and assistance of Gods good Spirit, which always accompanies a truly religious man to guide him into all truth which is necessary for him.

I will begin with the former, and shall endeavour to shew, that the practice of religious Duties hath a natural efficacy upon the mind, to clear its discerning faculties

culties to make it capable of understanding, and giving a full assent to the doctrine of the Gospel. And this I shall make appear by instancing in some particular duties, which are of a natural obligation, which no man can be ignorant of; each of which, singly considered, hath a very immediate influence upon the understanding, to make it capable of divine knowledge. In consideration of which it will also appear, that the contrary vices to these are the onely causes of dangerous and damnable errors. The Duties I shall particularly insist on, are these:

1. Simplicity of mind without prejudice.
2. Purity of heart and affections.
3. Humility.
4. Calmness of Temper.
5. Prayer to God.

These are all Duties of a natural obligation, and therefore he that comes to examin the truth of the Gospel cannot be presumed ignorant of, nor unwilling to practise them if he seek for knowledge with that preparation I have been speaking of.

1. He that examines the doctrine of the Gospel with this intention, to satisfy his

conscience concerning those things that are necessary for him to believe and do, resolving by Gods grace, to do the will of God, as far as it shal be made known to him; such a one will bring with him an honest simplicity of mind, not biassed by prejudice or preconceived opinions; such a one will consider with himself, that the truth of things doth not depend upon his own fancy, or petty reasonings; that a strong imagination cannot make those things Articles of Faith, which God hath not revealed; and therefore he will bring with him no preconceived opinion, which he will not be ready to lay aside upon sufficient evidence to the contrary; he will not endeavour to distort, and wrest the plain words of Scripture to that sense of things which he formerly had; but will readily yield up all his former notions to the authority of divine revelation. That we are naturally obliged to this simplicity of judgment in all enquiries after truth, is evident; because in all manner of disputes, this is one of the first things we challenge from our Adversary, as our undoubted right, that he would hear what we have to say, without prejudice; and therefore we also ought to bring

bring with us to a religious debate, the same free and unprejudiced minds which we expect from others. And indeed this temper of mind is highly necessary, and very advantageous to prepare us for the reception of truth. For certainly the power of prejudice is very great, to darken mens minds, and to mould them into such apprehensions as are most suitable to it. And therefore it is easie to observe how men who are engaged in a Party, and prepossessed with the distinguishing opinions of their Sect, easily find ways to pervert the plainest places of Scripture to their own sense, to make it agree with the Analogy of their Faith, that is, of their darling Notions. When I speak of laying aside prejudice in the search after divine truth, I do not understand that we must call in question all kind of preconceptions we have had concerning religious matters. Some things there are in Religion of so great certainty and evidence, that though an Angel from Heaven should teach us otherwise, we ought not to receive him. Such are those preconceptions we have concerning the Being and Attributes of God, that he is most wise, just, powerful, faithful,

and true, &c. Such also are the general notions of good and evil which God hath planted in every mans soul; which have so evident an obligation, that no pretended demonstration in the World ought to shake our belief of them. But there are other opinions which men take up upon lesser evidence; which they are sometimes as tenacious of, as of those first fundamental principles. And these sort of prejudices are commonly the great hindrances of the propagation of truth, there being scarcely any Sect in Religion which have not some peculiar tenets, which they take up upon weak and incompetent grounds, in proportion to which, they judge of all other doctrines, and make them the rule and measure, according to which all places of Scripture must be interpreted. Now in regard we all confess our selves liable to infirmity and mistake, it is certainly the most equitable and reasonable thing in the World, that when we come to enquire after truth, we resolve with our selves always to submit to clear evidence, though we have been otherwise persuaded. Now that the want of this temper is a very great hindrance both to the receiving the Gospel,

Gospel, and to our understanding it aright when we have received it, I shall endeavour to prove by two notorious instances of the power of prejudice in either of these cases.

The first instance shall be that of the Jews in our Saviours days. The great opposition which our Saviour met withall among the Jews, the great reason why they would not receive him for their Messias, was grounded upon this prejudice, that they took it for granted that their long expected Messias was to have been a temporal Prince, and to have appeared with worldly pomp and splendor; and that he should have delivered them from the Roman Yoke, and have reigned gloriously in *Jerusalem*. And therefore when they saw him appear in so mean and despicable a condition, not all the demonstrations of a divine authority accompanying him in all his mighty work, not the greatest wisdom with which he spake, not the most divine and excellent precepts he gave, not all the predictions of their Prophets fulfilled by him, not any of these things, though they were in themselves as great evidence as they could have required, yet none of them

them could prevail with them against that one prejudice, that his Power was to be temporal, and that he should *restore the kingdom to Israel* in a literal sense; which was inconsistent with that state of sufferings in which our Saviour appeared. Now that this Opinion of the Jews was taken up upon insufficient grounds is evident from hence; because though there are glorious things spoken of the Messias, yet his sufferings also are foretold by the same Prophets in as plain words as the other. Nay, it is expressly said by *Isaiah*, that the glory that should be given to the Messias, was to be consequent upon his sufferings, as a reward of them. And the Jews themselves have been so far sensible of the force of those predictions, to prove that the Messias should suffer, that to save those prophecies they invented a Fable concerning a two-fold Messias; one of which was to suffer for them, and the other to redeem them, and to reign gloriously over them. Though the Prophet *Isaiah ch. liij. v. 12.* expressly attributes both to the same person, making the suffering of the Messias the reason of the glory which God would afterward confer on him. *Therefore will I di-*
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vide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, &c.

But the minds of the Jews were strongly affected with the love of this present World, and the glory of it; and they hoped that in the days of the Messiah they should plentifully enjoy all the blessings of this life; and therefore they were resolved to believe no more of the Prophets than agreed with this opinion, that was so suitable to their inclinations, and were incapable of being convinced by the most powerful demonstration to the contrary, that could possibly be given. Thus we see how great the power of this one prejudice was, to hinder the Jews from receiving the Gospel at first.

Nor is the power of preconceived opinions and prejudices less dangerous to hinder our understanding the Gospel, when we have received it. And of this I might produce many instances in the several dissenting Parties in Christendom; every Sect having some peculiar and darling Notion, which they hold tenaciously against all opposition; and to comply with which, all other doctrines must be bowed and wrested, as they can best con-
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trive it. I shall give but one instance of this kind, and that is the doctrine of Infallibility, as it is maintained in the Church of *Rome*. This is the leading prejudice of that Party, which being once firmly received, it becomes the Mother of the most absurd and contradictory opinions in the World: and which is worst of all, makes those who believe it, uncapable of conviction by any argument, though never so clear and cogent. For what argument can possibly prevail with those who resolve to reject the testimony of their senses, though never so well qualified, rather than call in question the infallible decision of their Church. And this the Papists plainly do in the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which hath so many plain absurdities in it, and is so clearly contradicted by our several senses that are capable of judging in that matter, that there can be no other reason of their obstinate defending of it, but that they cannot renounce the doctrine without quitting their claim to Infallibility. It is beside my present business to consider upon what grounds they build that infallible power of their Church, in determining matters of Faith; but yet
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methinks I cannot persuade my self that they have any Argument for it so plain and cogent as the testimony of their senses; and therefore it cannot but seem a strange way of arguing which they use, to deny matter of fact evident to their several senses, to maintain a doctrine for which they have infinitely less evidence than that they reject. We see then how far preconceived opinions and prejudices may prevail, both to make men incapable of receiving the Gospel, and of understanding it rightly, when they have received it, and consequently how much this simplicity of mind doth contribute to our success in the enquiries we make after divine truth.

2. The second branch of duty, which doth highly conduce to our receiving the Gospel, and understanding it aright, is purity of heart; which consists chiefly in the moderation of our sensual appetites and pleasures. He that intends to do the will of God, must not retain in his bosom any lust or habitual inclination, which he is not willing to forego, if he find it contradictory to his will, whom he resolves to obey; and for that reason must have a constant watch over his sensual

sual desires, to keep them in their due bounds. Those natural appetites which every man is endued with, which tend to the preservation of life, and the propagation of mankind, are in themselves the work of God, and are designed by him for good ends; and we may lawfully gratifie them so far as is requisite for the accomplishment of those ends. But this is one of the greatest trials of our prudence and resolution in the government of our lives, to understand the true bounds, how far we may lawfully indulge the lower faculties, and to rest there: for if our Reason, which should preside over them, once let go the reins, by which she should govern and restrain them, they easily get the mastery, and are not to be reduced to their just measures without great difficulty and reluctancy. Now the regulating these desires I conceive to be that which our Saviour recommends to us *S. Matt. v. 8.* as a means to attain to the beatifical vision of God, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Which blessing, though it principally be understood of the blisful sight or knowledge of God in the Kingdom of Heaven; yet hath it part of its accomplishment in this life

life. The pure in heart being the best qualified to judge of those divine and spiritual things which God hath made known to us in the Gospel. And this will easily appear, if we consider how much the contrary Vices tend to the debauching the Understanding in these matters. The fumes of Lust and Intemperance are very pernicious to our rational powers; they make men dull and of no understanding even in the ordinary affairs of life: and then surely, if they make men unfit for worldly business, they will render them infinitely more incapable of religious enquiries. A man who is led captive by his impure desires, will not easily be brought to spend so much time to enquire seriously into the nature of Religion, as is necessary for his satisfaction; he is afraid he should be convinced of something that would ruffle and discompose his thoughts, awaken his conscience, and put a check to his Career of pleasure; and therefore, while he can find pretences to defer his enquiry, he will. But then suppose a man of this temper should for once undertake to peruse the Gospel, yet being prepossessed with the love of these sensual delights, he
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would find out many Arguments to defend himself withal; many arts and evasions to justify, or at least to palliate and excuse his practice; and then withall it is certain, he would not have a due relish of the excellency of those precepts which the Gospel gives, nor of the rewards it promises, they being of a more refined and spiritual nature, and of a kind so vastly different from what he is most delighted with. So S. Paul tells us 1 Cor. ij. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* To this purity of heart I have been speaking of, may be reduced a generous contempt of the World, a freedom from all covetous and ambitious desires; for he that hath his heart set upon riches, or upon the pomps and gallantries of the World, is not in any capacity of receiving or understanding the Gospel. These two Vices, Covetousness and Ambition, have even from the Apostles times been noted for the great causes of Infidelity and Heresie. The love of Money was that, which made the young man in our Saviours time go away sorrowful; because he
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could not be admitted a Disciple of our Saviour without relinquishing his large possessions. This was the cause of *Demas's* Apostasie from the Religion he once embraced; because he loved the present World. *Diotrephes* is noted by *S. John* for his ambition; for he withstood the Apostle, loving to have the pre-eminence. *S. Paul* also puts these two causes together; Pride and Covetousness, as the principal reasons of Heresie and false doctrine. *1 Tim. vi. 3.* If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine, which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words; supposing that gain is godliness. And indeed it is easie to observe how hard it is to convince any man of what is contrary to his interest or ambitious desires; and therefore we cannot but understand, that this duty of purity of heart, which consists in regulating our worldly and sensual affections, highly conduces to the understanding and embracing the Gospel; because it takes away those dangerous causes of Error and Apostasie.

3. A third branch of Duty, which I proposed to treat of, as being a necessary qualification for all Enquirers after divine truth, is Humility, and the efficacy of this duty to make us capable of divine impressions will appear, if we consider these properties of an humble and modest man.

1. He that is truly humble, and sensible of his many defects and infirmities, will readily acknowledge that he is not able to understand all Mysteries. He knows the nature of God which is infinite, cannot be comprehended by his finite and narrow faculties. He knows that no reasonings of ours can give us so true an account of the Nature and Attributes of God; and of the various methods of his providence towards men, as God himself can; and therefore he doth with all reverence submit his understanding to those revelations which God hath made in the Gospel; and provided they be there plainly delivered, he will not be discouraged from his belief of them, by any of those imperfect reasonings, wherewith men of corrupt minds may endeavour to shake his Faith.

2. A truly humble man will not be

too curious and inquisitive in prying into those things which are not clearly revealed; much less will he be positive and dogmatical concerning them. This vertue of humility will lead him to consider, that had the knowledge of such and such controverted doctrines been necessary for him, they would have been delivered in Scripture with the same plainness as other things of the greatest importance are; he will satisfy himself; that God was able to have interpreted his mind to the World as far as he thought convenient; and therefore where God hath not used this plainness, he thinks it a sufficient check to his curiosity; and that he ought not to pry into it. According to that of Moses, *Deut. xxix. 29. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever.*

3. An humble man is naturally apt to learn; he is willing to be instructed, he will easily believe that some other men may have better abilities to understand and judge of truth than himself; especially he will have a great deference and regard to his spiritual Guides, who are set over him for his instruction in the way of righteousness.

ness; he will consider that these men are commissioned by God, and have a peculiar promise of the divine Spirit, to enable them in the discharge of their holy Office; and therefore that they ought to be attended to with such reverence, as is due to the Ambassadors of God, to the interpreters of his mind and will. Not that the truly humble man is bound to yield a blind assent to whatever he hears delivered from a Pulpit, or that he is presently to renounce his own reason and understanding, whenever it is contradicted by his immediate Pastor. No, we do not claim this dominion over the reason and consciences of our brethren. We do not require an absolute assent to all we say: onely thus much an humble man will, and ought to think his duty, not to oppose every private scruple of his own, to the received doctrine of the Church in which he lives; much less to separate from it without manifest and plain grounds. He ought rather to distrust his own private judgment, when it stands in competition with the publick sense of the Church; and to use all possible diligence for further information, before he be positive in his opinion. He ought to apply him-

himself with all humility to his Superiours, to desire satisfaction from them, and he ought to attend to them with patience and submission, and to be very cautious, lest any prejudice or self-interest should be the ground of his persuasion; and then if after a due diligence he find himself still unconvinced, yet still humility will oblige him not to judge those who differ from him, nor to withdraw himself from the publick service of God, as long as there is nothing required of him as a condition of Communion, which he is not fully convinced to be unlawful. Now he that proceeds with this humility and deliberation in the examination of those doctrines of the Church which seem doubtful to him. This humble temper will either lead him to the means of satisfaction from the instruction of his Superiours, or at least will secure him from the danger and malignity of his Error. For simple Error is not dangerous in it self, unless it arise from a culpable cause; or unless it lead to sin or disobedience. And this an humble man will hardly be tempted to for the sake of any private Opinion.

4. An humble and modest man will

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be willing to yield to such Arguments as the matter he enquires about is capable of; and will not require greater evidence for revealed truths than the nature of the things will admit of.

And indeed the want of this temper of mind may justly be accounted the fundamental Principle of Atheism and Irreligion. Many disputers there are in the World, who think it an Argument of Wit and Parts, to be able to defend a Paradox, and to stand their ground against all opposition. These men seek not Truth, but Victory; and do not so much endeavour to satisfy themselves, as to amuse others: and therefore as long as they are able to raise an Objection which they think their Adversary cannot answer, they take it for granted that it is unanswerable; and think that a sufficient reason to deny the force of all positive Arguments whatsoever. Now this perverse and conceited way of disputing, renders men very unfit to enquire after truth in any kind of Science, but especially in Religion: for the doctrine of the Gospel is not capable of such proofs, but that a perverse and unteachable Spirit may find some kind of evasions, to abate the

the force of them; and may raise some kind of groundless suspicion, that possibly things might have been otherwise than they are there represented. The evidence of Christian Religion in these days doth in great measure depend upon the historical truth of those relations of matters of fact, which were done by our Saviour, and his Apostles in confirmation of the doctrine they taught; and the truth of those things is attested by as credible witnesses, as any matter of fact ever was; and matters of fact are not capable of any other or better proof than the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of them. But yet still a man that were perverse and obstinate might say, that the evidence of sense is more convincing than that of witnesses. That seeing is believing; and if I could see some of those signs and wonders wrought now, which are reported to have been done in our Saviours time, I would believe. But as for these Historical narrations, if either the Authors of them were themselves deceived, or did intend to deceive or delude posterity, neither of which is absolutely impossible; if either of these things should have been, those relations are no evidence

at all. Now although it be the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the world to suppose, that so many thousands of the Primitive Christians should lay down their lives so cheerfully in testimony of the truth of the Gospel, without being satisfied about it themselves, or with intention to deceive others. Though this be the absurdest thing in the world, yet if any man will be so perverse as to think so of the Apostles and first Christians, what further Argument can be used to convince him? For what further evidence can we expect of any mans sincerity in what he saith, than that he will lay down his life to attest it, as they did? And then for their knowledge in these things, we may well appeal to the divine wisdom, wherewith they spake and wrote, that such men could not be deceived in the plainest matters. Yet still the testimony of the Apostles and first Christians is not so great evidence, as that of sense; though it be as great as the nature of the thing is capable of. And therefore a man that is resolved to yield to nothing but sensible demonstration, must expect to go away unsatisfied, as to the truth of the Gospel, because it is not now capable
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of that kind of evidence. But now an humble Enquirer after truth, that sought for knowledge in order to practice, such a one would not be thus obstinate and refractory in his proceedings: He would content himself with such evidence as the things he enquires about are capable of, and will require no greater. And indeed it is reasonable to suppose, that those perverse disputers, who are not content with that rational evidence we have for the truth of the Gospel, would not be convinced, though they saw a miracle. For our Saviour hath plainly told us in a like case, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe though one arise unto them from the dead.* The Law of *Moses* was at first confirmed to the Jews by miracles, but afterwards they were to be content with the testimony of their Fathers concerning it, and those who would not believe the doctrine of *Moses* upon that evidence, according to our Saviours judgment, would not be convinced by the greatest miracle, even the resurrection of one from the dead. The case is now the same with us, as it was with the Jews in our Saviours time. At the first promulgation of the Gospel,
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it was confirmed from Heaven by such signs and wonders, and mighty works, which could not have been wrought but by the almighty power of God, attesting the truth of what our Saviour and his Apostles taught. But the doctrine of the Gospel being once sufficiently confirmed, God expects now that man should rest satisfied with that evidence which he then gave; and is conveyed down to us by the testimony of those, who were witnesses of those miracles and mighty works with which it was then attested. Nor is it to be expected that God should now work miracles to convince the obstinate, since the evidence he hath already given is sufficient for those who are humble and teachable, and will render the obstinate inexcusable. Men may therefore, if they please, dispute themselves out of their Religion upon I know not what vain surmises, and set up for Wits, and men of more than ordinary reach, not to be imposed on by any Historical Narrations, though never so well attested; but in the end they will find how far this perverse and arrogant humour falls short of true wisdom: when for the sake of that they reject the divine and heavenly doctrine,
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which if carefully attended to and obeyed, is able to save their souls. By what hath been said it is easie to understand how necessary a qualification humility is, in order to our enquiry after truth, and how effectual it is to make us fit for the reception of it.

4. A fourth branch of duty very advantageous to us, to make us capable of divine knowledge, is calmness of temper and moderation of passions. He that comes to enquire after truth, must bring with him a quiet and sedate temper; he must be willing to hear patiently what can be said on both sides, and by no means engage his passion on either part, till he hath first satisfied his Reason about it. Our passions are then very useful and beneficial to us, when they promote our vigour in the prosecution of things that are vertuous and praise-worthy, and when they encourage us to make a bold resistance against all things that are wicked and unworthy of us; but then, that we may be assured that our passion is duely exercised, it is necessary that our reason should have first thoroughly considered of the matter, and given in its impartial sentence, before we suffer our passions

passions to interpose in our examination of truth. For when once our affections are engaged on any side, they do certainly bias the judgment and make it admit of every small appearance or shadow of truth, which seems to favour the opinion we have a fancy for, and to reject with disdain the strongest reasonings, when they are opposed to what we desire should be true. Men do not then sincerely seek for truth, but endeavour to prove that true which they have a mind to; and though they happen to be mistaken, they will not then endure to be better informed, and are impatient of any contradiction. And this is accounted one great reason, why among so many Writers of Controversie so few have ever changed the opinions they at first maintained, or have yielded the cause, when they have been fairly and fully answered: Alas! it is hard for them to renounce those beloved notions which had been impressed on their minds in their younger years, and they had rather take hold of any shift or evasion, then grant they had been in an error. But if they find their own reason begin to waver, being in part convinced by the force of contrary reasons,

sons, they fly for refuge to the Authority of others, and fortifie themselves with this consideration, that such and such men are men of noted learning and piety, and yet they are all of this opinion; and yet doubtless they understood the force of those arguments better than we do, and would have yielded to them, had they thought them convincing. Thus when Reason of it self would yield, yet their affection to the cause, and the men that maintain it makes them hold out still; and though they have a glimpse of truth, they dare not, they cannot receive it.

But the passion I intended principally to speak of, as being a great hindrance to our receiving the Truth, is that of Anger; which is a boisterous, unruly passion, and disorders all the powers of the reasonable soul, and makes them wholly unfit for any impressions of truth. A man that is angry and impatient, will not allow his Adversary leave to speak out half an argument, but presently he is provoked, and then he is not able to make a reasonable defence though he should have the truth on his side, he doth not then consider what is most fit and proper to be
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said, but casts out at random what his passion first suggests to him: all his thoughts are then in commotion, and like the troubled waves, will not receive any perfect image of things, and you may as well hope to convince a mad man as him.

Now this heat of passion, as it makes men very unfit to be wrought upon by others, so it commonly suggests to us very improper ways of arguing, when we endeavour to convince them who differ from us. This temper of mind produces those sharp and satyrical Treatises, whereby some men endeavour, if not to convince, yet to shame and silence their Adversaries, by exposing their persons, and representing them to the World under odious Characters. Now certainly what ever these men may hope, this method of railing and reviling, though the persons they accuse may really deserve all that is said of them, yet I say, this is not a fit method for the propagation of truth. For as the piety of one man ought to be no defence or security for his error; so neither ought it to be any argument against the truth, that it is defended by a bad man: and therefore all the Arguments that are levelled against the person
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of our Adversary, are wholly besides the purpose; they tend onely to the breach of Charity, not to the convincing any mans judgment that differs from us. And certainly our blessed Savior, when he gave us so many precepts of meekness and charity towards all men, when he so often requires us not to judge and condemn our brethren, over whom we have no jurisdiction; when he represents to us the danger of uncharitable speeches, *S. Matt. v. 22. Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.* When our Saviour so often inculcates these and the like precepts, requiring so humble and charitable demeanour towards our brethren both in thoughts & words; he cannot be supposed to give the least permission to his Disciples to endeavour to propagate or defend any part of his doctrine by reproachful and contumelious usage of the persons they contend with. Sure I am, his own example was infinitely different from what men practise in these days. Our Saviour had certainly more clear right on his side, than any man can now pretend to, but was entertained with the greatest contradiction

diction of sinners that can be intagined;
 and if any injury might justly provoke
 our rage and passion, those offered to our
 Saviour were of the most hairious and
 provoking nature; but yet, *when he was
 reviled, he reviled not again; when he suf-
 fered, he threatned not; he rendered not
 evil for evil, nor railing for railing; but
 committed himself to him that judgeth righ-
 teously.* And now can any man pretend
 to own the obligation of our Saviours
 precepts and example, and yet contend
 for the truth of his doctrine with so
 much bitterness and virulency of speech
 towards their dissenting brethren, as some
 of our zealous Disputants do in these
 days. S. Jude tells us that *Michael the
 Archangel, when he contended with the
 Devil, he durst not bring against him a rai-
 ling accusation:* and how then can we
 presume to do it in our Religious debates
 with our Christian brethren, who for
 ought we know, notwithstanding our
 misconceptions of them, may be in truth
 the children of God, though fallen into
 error. In a word, to conclude this par-
 ticular, he that would learn, must be wil-
 ling to be contradicted, and hear with
 patience what may be said, be it never so
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opposite to his former notions, or to his present wishes. Otherwise he will be hardly capable to judge aright. Again, he that would instruct and convince others, must do it also with calmness of spirit, confuting error with all the clearness and perspicuity he is able, but sparing the persons he endeavours to reform. For if by reproach and contumely he provoke their passion, whom he should instruct, he destroys the force of all his reasoning by discomposing those faculties which should judge of it.

5. The fifth point of duty which I proposed to speak of, as having great influence upon our understanding and receiving the Gospel, is Prayer to God. This is a duty of natural obligation, as may appear by the many precepts of ancient Philosophers concerning it. *Pythagoras* in particular advises to undertake no work, to endeavour nothing without imploring the divine assistance. Ἀλλ' ἐρχέσθαι ἐπ' ἔργον θεοῖσιν ἐπεμυξάμενος. πλάττω. This he subjoins to many other precepts of Vertue, as the complement and perfection of them. And surely if the imploring the divine assistance is necessary in all our concerns, it is principally to be
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regarded in our search of divine Truth, For to whom should we seek for knowledge but to him who is the Fountain of Truth, the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect gift comes. And the same Philosopher immediately after his precepts of Vertue, and his direction to pray to God to bless and perfect our endeavours, he adds this, as the first and principal benefit that would redound to us thereby, that we should by so doing gain the knowledge both of the divine and humane nature; which is not much different from what I have hitherto endeavoured to prove, *viz.* that the practice of Vertue hath in it self a natural efficacy to clear the understanding, and make it capable of divine knowledge; and surely if Philosophers by the force of natural principles, understood the necessity we had of the divine assistance in all our endeavours, and that Prayer was the means by which it was to be sought, we who have received better means of instruction than they had, cannot be ignorant of this point of duty: especially the doctrine of the Gospel being so full of precepts of this kind, requiring us to pray to God in all our exigencies, and
assu-

assuring us of success by so doing, if we be not wanting to our selves. Thus particularly, *Luke xi. 9.* our Saviour advises us, *Ask and it shall be given you.* And then follows, *v. 13.* *If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* And *S. James* yet more nearly to our present purpose directs us to make our humble addresses to God in order to the attainment of divine knowledge. *James i. 5.* *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men plenteously and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

I have thus far insisted on some particular duties, each of which singly considered, hath a very great efficacy to enable us to understand those truths which are revealed in the Gospel; and to make us capable of satisfaction concerning them. From whence the inference will be easie and obvious, that if the practice of each of these be very useful, and beneficial to us in our search after knowledge; then surely where these are all united, they cannot ordinarily fail of their desired effect. But yet we are to consider further, That the condition which our Sa-

vour here requires, is not compleated in our observance of those particular duties above-mentioned; but in an universal and impartial obedience to the Will of God, as far as it is already known to us, and in a sincere resolution to obey him in all further revelations of his Will, which upon perusal of the Gospel, we shall find to be our duty. And a man thus qualified, besides the natural efficacy of Vertue to make him fit for receiving the Gospel, hath moreover a peculiar promise of the divine blessing and assistance to enlighten his mind, and to guide him into all necessary truth. And this is the second account upon which we may be assured of the truth of our Saviours proposition, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.*

God, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, will not be wanting to any, who seek for truth with a sincere resolution to submit to it: especially to those who have already exercised themselves in doing his will according to their knowledge, he will not fail to afford such

such further means of instruction as is necessary for them, according to what our Saviour saith in the parable of the Talents, *Mat. xxv. 29. Unto every man that hath, that is, who maketh a due use of what he hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* Every one who sincerely endeavours to live up to that measure of knowledge he hath, God will give to him such further degrees of knowledge, as shall be suitable and necessary for him; and of this we have a great signal example in *Cornelius* the good Centurion, *Acts 10. whose Prayers and Alms*, while he was a stranger to Christs Religion, were so far accepted by God, that he was pleased miraculously to direct him to *Peter* for further instruction what he ought to do.

Now although we are not to expect that all sincere Enquirers after Truth shall be thus miraculously instructed, as *Cornelius* was; yet God hath given us abundant assurance, that no such person shall miscarry for want of necessary knowledge. For to this end God hath given his Holy Spirit, to continue with his Church to the end of the World, to guide it into all necessary truth, and to

assist and govern every lively member of Christs body in the knowledge and practice of all that is indispensably required of him. God himself hath a singular delight and pleasure in good men, as the holy Psalmist tells us, *Psalm cxlvij. 11. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy:* and our Saviour assures us, that God will condescend to dwell and inhabit with such persons; which I conceive cannot be understood in any other sense, than that there is a very near intercourse between God and good men, that God is always ready to assist and succour them in whatsoever they call upon him for. *John xiv. 23. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* And then surely being blest with the presence of such a Guest, they cannot want any measure of knowledge in the ways of God, that is necessary for them.

To conclude then, what remains now, but if we desire knowledge and satisfaction in the Religion we profess, that we apply our selves to seek it in this way which our Saviour hath prescribed, *viz.* with sincere resolutions and endeavours

to do the will of God according to our knowledge. This is the onely way whereby true knowledge is to be obtained, he that seeks in this way shall not miscarry. *For if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.*

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8-11-11

I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.

This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf from an old book. The paper has a visible texture and some minor blemishes, including small dark spots and faint smudges, characteristic of old paper. There is no text or other markings on the page.

0.20.11
S E R M. IV.

H E B. xij. I.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

IN the former Chapter of this Epistle the Apostle gives us a large account of the afflictions and sufferings of those Patriarchs and Prophets, and other holy men, who lived before the coming of our Saviour; and the words I have now read are an inference from their example, that we also having before
our

our eyes the glorious things which they did and suffered, and calling to mind the mighty power and efficacy of their Faith in overcoming the World and enduring afflictions, may from thence be excited to a like vigour and constancy in our Christian profession. So that the words contain these two things worthy our consideration: An Exhortation, and the reason of it.

The Exhortation in these words;

Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race which is set before us.

The reason of the Exhortation in these words:

Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.

I shall begin with the Exhortation.

There is nothing more usual in holy Scripture; than to represent the duty of a Christian under the similitude of such other employments, as carry with them the greatest difficulties, and require the most exact care and vigilance in those who under-

undertake them. Sometimes we are compared to Soldiers, who must be always upon the Guard: sometimes to Travelers and Pilgrims, who have a long and hazardous journey to make: sometimes to those who strive for Masteries in publick Games. Now these several sorts of employments do all presuppose these two things.

1. That those who undertake them do propose to themselves some great and considerable end, some reward of their labours.

2. That there are great difficulties to be passed through, great industry, and care, and watchfulness to be used for the attainment of it.

The case is not unlike in our Christian Profession. We have a glorious prize of our high Calling set before us; we have an exceeding great reward, a Crown of Glory laid up for us, which God the righteous Judge and just Rewarder of those that diligently seek him, will not fail to bestow on such as overcome. But then we must not expect this Reward and Crown upon any other condition, than that we approve ourselves as men who have fought the good fight of Faith manfully

fully and courageously ; who have strove lawfully and endured to the end. The similitude used in the Text is taken from those Trials of Skill, those publick Exercises which were used in the Olympick Games. Now for those who run in a Race, there are three things necessary to be done, if they hope to gain the victory : in proportion to which the whole duty of a Christian is expressed in this Exhortation.

1. They must free themselves from all unnecessary burdens, from all their loose garments which may clog or entangle them in their way ; they must *lay away every weight.*

2. They must be active and vigorous in the course ; they must *run the race set before them.*

3. They must continue their vigour and courage to the end of the race. This I conceive to be meant by *running with patience*, that is, with perseverance and continuance in well-doing. Now it is easie to apply these several circumstances to our Christian duty, and I shall consider each of them.

1. It is easie to understand, that what is here metaphorically expressed, by *lay-
ing*

ing aside every weight, is the same with what S. Paul elsewhere teaches us in plain terms, and calls the *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and what our Saviour means by *denying our selves*. The riches, honours, and pleasures of the World, and the love of them, which S. John calls *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*, are not unfitly compared to so many clogs and weights that press down the soul, and are apt to make it dull and unactive, and divert it from the ways of holiness: and the laying aside these incumbrances, the freeing our minds from these affections and desires, and from the love of all things else whatsoever; nay, of our life it self when it stands in competition with our duty, is so necessary a preparation for our running the race set before us, that without so doing we are not capable of being Christs Disciples, Mat. xvj. 24. *Jesus said unto his Disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* S. Mat. x. 38. *He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* Now that the renouncing and forsaking our carnal lusts and desires is most generally to be understood by taking

king up the cross, and denying our selves, I conceive evident from hence; because it is made a necessary qualification of all that will be Christs Disciples, not onely those who suffer persecutions, but all that will be Christians must in their proportion deny themselves, and take up the Cross. These and the like expressions are universal, not limited to any time or place, or other circumstances, but equally belong to all Christians, *Luke xiv. 26.* *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sister, yea and his own life also, cannot be my Disciple: and whosoever doth not bear his cross, and follow me, cannot be my Disciple.* Now the hating these things in the literal sense can then onely be our duty, when the love of them is inconsistent with our profession of Christianity; for otherwise they ought to be most dear to us: but this is a case which very seldom happens. The taking up the Cross therefore, and denying our selves which is required of all Christians, must be interpreted of laying aside our irregular lusts and desires: which is agreeable to this interpretation, called *crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts;* and

and is expressed in the Text, by *laying aside every weight*: nay possibly if it were not beside my present design, it would be no difficult task to make it appear, that denying our selves, and taking up the Cross, in this sense I am speaking, the mortifying and subduing our fleshly appetites, the freeing our minds from evil habits and inclinations, and from the darling sins we have delighted in, may be a greater trial of our obedience and love to God, and our desire to please him, than even the laying down our lives for the testimony of the truth of the Gospel. Many men can be prodigal of life, and die with great bravery and resolution, when they would think it a very hard and laborious employment to endure the severities of mortification; and to wean themselves from some long accustomed pleasure and temptation. But to return to the business in hand, *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beget us.*

I shall not pretend to give a Catalogue of those particular lusts and desires, which by the force of this Exhortation we are to forsake and lay aside. The variety of them is infinite, according to the several

several ways of living men are engaged in, according to the difference of their temper and constitution, and other outward circumstances. I shall onely take notice of two general rules in this matter, which the Text suggests to us.

I. That our care in this affair be universal and impartial: that according to our knowledge and ability we *lay aside every weight*. It is not sufficient that we abstain from this or that particular habit of sin, if at the same time we wilfully indulge our selves in others. Though a man be able to say with the Pharisee, and to say truly, that *he is not an extortioner, unjust, adulterer*, nor as this and that particular man, whom he may observe in his neighbourhood that is worse than himself; yet all this while he may cherish in his bosom other darling lusts, and habitual practices, which may exclude him from the kingdom of Heaven, notwithstanding his caution and abstinence in other things. For alas! a man may abstain from many kinds of temptation which others are betrayed by, and yet be guilty of no great vertue in so doing. For not onely Vertue and Vice, but even several Vices themselves are at enmity with

with, and mutually destroy one another; and therefore it is no vertue in a covetous man, that he abstains from profuseness and luxury; nor is it praise-worthy in the prodigal, that his heart is not set upon riches. If the Hypocrite give alms to be seen of men, if the ambitious man be courteous and affable, though these things be the proper matter of Vertue, yet inasmuch as they proceed not from any principle of obedience, or love to God, they are no part of that duty and allegiance we owe him, nor will they be accepted by him; nay certainly he that abstains from some kinds of Vice onely to indulge himself in the contrary extream, is so far from laying aside those weights which hinder him in his Christian course, that he rather loads himself the heavier, and is still more unfit for so great an undertaking; and indeed so necessary it is, that we should be impartial in this affair, that we should lay aside every weight, that unless our diligence extend thus far, any single habit of evil that we indulge our selves in, is sufficient to defeat us of our victory, and to bereave us of our Crown and Triumph: because in Gods account he who wilfully

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harbours in his bosome any one habitual
 lust, which he is not willing to forego
 for Gods sake, is as guilty as though he
 broke all his laws. So S. James tells us
 Chap. 2. v. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole
 law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty
 of all.* And he adds the reason of it in
 the next verse, because the same autho-
 rity of God is equally concerned in all
 his laws, and is therefore equally con-
 temned in the wilful breach of one, as of
 all or any. *For he that said, do not com-
 mit adultery, said also, do not kill;* and cer-
 tainly he who picks and chooses the sins
 he will forbear, and what not, is deter-
 mined in his choice not by any respect he
 bears to the will of God, but by his own
 temper and inclination. For if he ab-
 stained from any one sin out of pure obe-
 dience to the Will of God, because God
 did forbid it, this reason would equally
 hold against all kind of transgression,
 because they are all abominable in the
 sight of God: nor could we have a rea-
 son to forbear one more than others.
 Again further, unless our care in this bu-
 siness be universal and impartial, to lay
 aside every weight, to free our minds
 from all affections and desires that may
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hinder us in our duty, we are not entirely at our own dispose, and are not therefore in a fit capacity to render to God that obedience which is due to him, and which he expects from us. He who gave us our being and endued our souls with so many excellent perfections and abilities, may justly expect and require of us that they be entirely devoted to his service, and he hath accordingly declared that he will accept no less. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* But this cannot be done, while we cherish in our bosom any inordinate desire, any lust, or passion which claims an interest in our affections, a share in our service, *Mat. vj. 24. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: we cannot serve God and Mammon.* What is there particularly said of the love of riches, is as true of any other habitual inclination to evil which we indulge our selves in. If we cannot serve God and Mammon, neither can we serve God and our Lusts, we cannot serve God and our Ambition, we cannot serve God and the Devil.

2. Besides this universal care exprest here, by laying aside every weight, we have here in the Text another rule of direction suggested to us, which may render us yet more fit and expedite for the race set before us, *viz.* that we be more particularly careful to arm our selves against those temptations, to lay aside those lusts, to which we perceive our selves by nature, or custom most inclined.

This I conceive is meant here by *the sin which doth so easily beset us*. Every man who gives himself the leisure to examine his own heart impartially, will find that some temptations have a great deal more easie access to him than others: and our great adversary the Devil is very diligent and watchful to set before us such objects, and lay such snares in our way, which are most likely to prevail upon us. The sins we are naturally inclined to oft-times creep upon us insensibly, and get possession of our hearts before we are well aware of them. Sometimes they disguise themselves under the pretence of Piety and seeming holiness, and a great zeal against the contrary extream. Sometimes they plead Nature and Custom for their continuance, that these cannot be over-

overcome: sometimes we have ways to extenuate them, and make them seem small and venial; and if men take time to deliberate about parting with them, there is great hazard but they will keep possession. So apt are we to be vanquished, when we have a mind to it; when our Adversaries from without have their correspondents in our own bosom; when we have so many treacherous Guests, so many deceitful Lusts within us, which are ready to betray us, and to yield up our hearts to a subtle and powerful enemy. Here then is our greatest danger; here we must exert our greatest care and vigilance; here we must shew our courage and resolution, in throwing off these darling and beloved Lusts, the *sins that do so easily beset us*. This is that which our Saviour elsewhere requires of us, when he bids us cut off our right hands, and pluck out our right eyes, when they make us to offend. And thus much for the first part of the Exhortation.

Having according to our power laid aside every weight, having freed our selves from our evil habits, and customs, and from our most secret and beloved

Lusts, we are not to rest here. Thus much is required as a preparation to be Christs Disciples; but when we are admitted into the number, we must then set our selves upon an active obedience to his Laws. A negative holiness will not serve our turn. We must not onely eschew evil, but we must do what good we can in the several places and stations to which God hath called us. They who run in a Race, when they have stript themselves, and laid aside all unnecessary weights and incumbrances, have yet the whole Race before them which they must run through, if they expect their Crown and Prize: and therefore in proportion to what is required of them, we also are exhorted, in the

2. Second place, *to run the Race set before us.* Now the positive duties required of all Christians, answer to that part of the similitude, and to discharge them faithfully, is meant by *running the race set before us.* And this is elsewhere expressed in plainer Exhortations. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, giving all diligence, add to your faith verine, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience,*

tience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any praise, or if there be any vertue, think on and do these things. Now these and the like Exhortations and Precepts often repeated in holy Scripture being all in general terms, the particular instances of duty required by them, must be left to each mans private consideration; and they are various according to mens several abilities and opportunities, according to their several relations in which God hath placed them. God the supreme ἀρχοντής, hath by his wise and good providence allotted every man his course. It is not of our choosing, but it is a race set before us. He hath likewise distributed among men various gifts and abilities, whereby they are severally fitted to do good; and according to these every man must judge of his duty in particular, what it is that the Lord requires of him; and no man who doth not want will and resolution to do the will of God,

can ordinarily be ignorant what he ought to do; and therefore I shall not descend to any particular instances of duty; only from the similitude here used, I shall crave leave to suggest these two things.

1. That our obedience to God ought to be vigorous and chearful.

2. That it ought to be constant and uninterrupted.

1. The similitude of *Running* imports great vigour and alacrity in the discharge of our duty. They who run with hopes of Victory must not be faint-hearted and languish, but must be chearful, and courageous, full of hope and eager expectation of the desired triumph. Thus must a Christian behave himself in the race set before him. He must go about his duty with chearfulness and freedom, as one that doth it with a willing mind, and hopes for success by so doing. He must always have in his eye the great recompence of reward, the joy set before him, the Crown of Glory laid up for him; and in prospect of that he must chearfully undertake whatever difficulties he meets with

with in his way. And indeed if we have once obeyed the former part of the Exhortation, if we have once freed our minds from the low and sordid cares and incumbrances of this life present, there can then remain nothing to hinder or retard our motion, or to abate our courage in running the Race set before us. And this holy *David* seems to express; saying, *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast set my heart at liberty.* When we are once at liberty from the World, and have weaned our affections from things below, and placed them on a better and more enduring substance, then though we meet with dangers and inconveniences, we shall joyfully go on, and every days progress in our course of piety will render our task more easie and delightful. We shall apprehend our selves every day more and more, approaching to the end of our hopes, and to the Crown of our labours, and out of prospect of so sure a reward, so nigh at hand; and out of a fore-taste of that happiness shall be able to say of Religion from our own experience, that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths Peace.

2. Another thing represented by this
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similitude of *Running* is, that our course of Piety, our religious conversation ought to be constant and uninterrupted. He that runs in a Race cannot find leisure to stop and divert himself, or salute his friends by the way. A little needless ceremony at such a time, may hazard the loss of the whole prize. His adversary perhaps, who was of less ability and courage, may by such an advantage easily get the start of him, and defeat him of the Crown, and he become the derision and scorn of the beholders. The case is not unlike in our Christian Race. It is not sufficient that we be Religious and Devout by fits and starts, at some set time, or upon some solemn occasion; but it ought to be our constant behaviour, the continued imployment of our lives. The doing the will of God is much more our business than any other imployment whatsoever; and ought to be as constantly and vigorously pursued. For if at any time we give our selves leisure to be idle, and make any least delay or stop in our Christian Race, alas we do not consider how easily we may fall short of our desired end. For how fast soever we go on in our way, our former lusts and

and desires we had cast off, will be sure to follow us close, to tread in our steps, and will watch every opportunity to desire Parley with us, and entreat our stay. And if we once make the least intermission to treat with them, it is easie to foresee how soon our vigour and heat with which we began the Race, will abate and cool: our joints will then grow stiff and unactive, and then presently a thousand difficulties arise, and we are as far from our Journies end as when we first set out. So dangerous a thing it is, when we have begun well, and gone on for a while, then to stay and look back, and deliberate whether we shall go farther or not. Nay in these cases of a moral nature to stay, is to go backward. For such is the nature of man, he cannot be altogether idle; if he be not engaged in things that are good and vertuous, he will certainly be employed in somewhat else that is bad and sinful. And then it is very plain, that a good habit is much more weakened by a little intermission, than it can be strengthened or improved by many instances of Vertue. So that from these considerations it may abundantly appear, how necessary it is that our progress

gress in this Race before us should be constant and uninterrupted.

3. The third and last part of this Exhortation is, that our vigour and diligence in this affair must be continued to the end of our lives : *We must run with patience.* How diligent and active soever we may have been in the practice of our duty, how far soever we have proceeded in our Christian Race, let no man yet flatter himself that he hath done his whole duty, or that he hath attained to the utmost degree of perfection he is capable of; or that he is already secure of his Reward and Crown. For this is a very dangerous mistake, and many who did run once well, may upon this presumption foolishly miscarry, notwithstanding all their pains and labour they have heretofore endured. All the promises of a future reward are limited to such as persevere in well-doing; and this very similitude is a clear evidence of it. For who ever pretended to have won the prize, without running to the end of the Race? Now there is nothing more plain than that our life here is the time of our trial, wherein we must work out our salvation, and run the Race set before us ;
and

and that the life to come is the time of reward or retribution. As long therefore as we live here, we must keep up our diligence in our Christian calling, labouring every day to go on from strength to strength, to grow in grace, and to improve in the practice of all virtue and godliness of living. And as for those who imagine to themselves I know not what security of their condition, they would do well to remember, that God hath assured us that he hath made no such irrevocable decree for any particular mans salvation, but that he is in a possibility of falling short of it, if he fall from his uprightness and integrity. *Ex. 33. 13. When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live, if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered. For his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.* Out of a sense of the possibility and danger of this, *S. Paul* exhorts us, *1 Cor. x. 12. Wherefore let him that thinketh he stands, take heed lest he fall.* Where the Apostle plainly intimates, that they who think themselves perfect and secure of their condition, are in greater danger of falling than others; because that very
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security is apt in its own natural tendency to make men supine and negligent, and unwilling to proceed further in the Race set before them. The truth is, as long as we are in the body, though we have made it our endeavour to throw off every weight, though we have used great diligence in our Christian Race, yet still we have something more to do; we have still many adversaries to contend with, many temptations to resist; the seed of those desires which we had before, do still remain in us, which will always afford new matter for our vigilance and care. Nor can we ever be secure that we have earned our prize till we have finished our course with patience, and God calls us hence to receive our reward. Sure I am, if any man might be secure before hand that he had done his whole duty, and was now ascertained of his reward, *S. Paul* might pretend as reasonably to that privilege as any other; but yet he describes his own condition as still imperfect, and still depending upon his future diligence: *Phil. ij. 12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am ap-*
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prehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Thus if we would follow S. Pauls example, and the Exhortation in the Text, we must still continue pressing forward, and run with patience to the end of our race.

Having thus far considered the Exhortation in the Text, and the extent of it, I might now endeavour to enforce it by representing to your thoughts the exceeding great reward, the glorious prize we are to run for in the Race set before us, Which is so great a degree of blessedness, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man sufficiently to conceive of it. I might also here recal to your remembrance the faithfulness, and truth, and goodness of God, who hath promised this reward, and will bestow it on those who have endured to the end and run with patience. I might farther add the consideration of the assistances of Gods good Spirit, the great comfort, support and joy which it affords

us in this spiritual Race, which infinitely over-balance all the false pleasures we forsake, and all the difficulties we undergo in undertaking this enterprize. And lastly, I might put you in mind of the great danger, reproach, and confusion of face, which will certainly attend us, if by our negligence and indifference we fall short of this glorious prize; all which arguments ought to have a mighty influence upon us, to awake and excite our utmost industry and vigour, to promote our vigilance, and to confirm, strengthen and maintain our courage, constancy and resolution to go on stedfastly in the ways of holiness, and to run with patience the Race set before us. But the prosecution of these and the like arguments would be too large a scope for the time allotted to this exercise, and the words of the Text confine my thoughts to a more particular consideration of the example of the Saints, Martyrs, and holy Confessors, who have gone before us in this glorious Race, and have already finished their course with patience. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, &c.* The word *Martyr* or *Witness* in an Ec-
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clesiastical sense is usually restrained to such onely, who have laid down their lives in testimony of the truth of the Gospel; but in the language of holy Scripture, I find no such limitation of it. Any of these who were either great examples of obedience and faith in God, any who bare witness to divine truth, though they were not called to suffer death for that testimony, being indifferently stiled by that name. The Fathers mentioned in the former Chapter cannot all be accounted Martyrs in the stricter sense, however they all help to make up the number, which by reason of the multitude of them, is here called a Cloud of Witnesses. Now the force of their witness and example to engage us in alike diligence and constancy in running the Race set before us, I shall endeavour to represent in these following particulars.

I. They were witnesses of the truth, and faithfulness, and goodness of God, in whom we believe; that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; and therefore that our labour and industry in our Christian Race shall not be in vain, I mention this truth more particularly, because it seems to be the

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only Creed, which all the Saints recited in the former Chapter, agreed in. Some of them, 'tis true, had a great prospect and hope of a Messias to come. *Abraham* rejoiced to see his day. *Jacobs* prophecy of him is very punctual and particular. The other Prophets give witness to him. But yet it appears not, that all there mentioned had any knowledge at all, either that he was to come, or what he should do or suffer for the World. And therefore the Apostle in the beginning of the Chapter, lays down that, *viz.* *That God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, as the fundamental Article of their Belief, in confidence of which they willingly underwent so many Trials and Temptations with such bravery and undaunted resolution. If therefore we look upon these men only as giving testimony to this truth, yet this alone is sufficient reason for our imitation of them, and doth justify the wisdom of our choice in being religious, and serving the same God on whom they believed, and forsaking all in obedience to him, as they did before us. Since we have the same convictions of Reason that they had, that our God whom we serve,

is a Rewarder of those that put their trust in him, and are further confirmed in our belief of this, by their patience and constancy in the same Profession, and by their chearful suffering Persecution for it. By their suffering we have this satisfaction at least, that we are not singular in this our persuasion concerning God, and that he hath not been without his Witnesses in all Ages, who have laid down their lives in this Faith and Assurance: and therefore we ought to be stedfast in it without wavering. Now if any should object, that the numbers of those who have died in this Faith, though they are here called a Cloud of Witnesses, are yet but a very few in comparison of those who have lived without God in the World, and have despised and rejected all hopes of a future reward. To this it is easie to reply, that the credit of any testimony doth not depend on the number and noise of those that affirm any thing; but from the manner of the evidence they give. Now a few men who give sufficient proof that they understand perfectly what they say and do, and would not deceive others, are more to be valued as Witnesses, than ten thousand of the

ruder multitude, who take up reports upon trust, and if you come to examine them they shrink into nothing. They said something, they know not what; but know not whence they had it, nor why they said it. The case is the same in matters of religion; those that have been truly pious and religious, have in all Ages been men of the clearest and best understandings, that have always been able to give a reason of their Hope that was in them; and to satisfie the World that they did not pretend this for any temporal advantage; they did deliberately and chearfully expose themselves to the most severe Trials and Persecutions for their testimony of it, *not accepting deliverance, as the Apostle speaketh, that they might obtain a better resurrection.* This was the case of those Heroick Spirits recited in the foregoing Chapter. They were men of sound mind, as appears by the glorious things they did and suffered, many of which are at large recorded in sacred Story. They knew the value of life as well as others; they were sensible of disgrace, and pain, and want, and could have no reason to expose themselves to these things without a mighty evidence and

and conviction of the truth of what they believed concerning God, of the greatness of his Power, that he was able to reward them after this life; of the greatness of his Wisdom, that he knew when and how to do it better than they could choose; of the Justice of his Providence, that he would certainly do it. But then on the contrary, for those that have rejected this belief, or at least have not lived answerably to it, it is plain that much the greatest part of them are only a rash inconsiderate multitude, of no understanding in these matters, who never took time to think whether Religion had any real foundation in Nature or Reason, or not; and therefore these are not competent Judges in the case, and not to be regarded as Witnesses. For those others, who have lived wickedly, and have yet had some reason to consider of the grounds and obligations of a religious course of life; it is plain that these are most of them self-condemned, and act against the conviction of their conscience, being as it were bribed in their testimony by the love they bear to the pleasures, and profits, and honours of this World. Now if we lay aside these two sorts of

men, those that act by no principle of Reason at all, and those who are manifestly corrupted by their lusts, and smother and contradict their own Reason; neither of which can be esteemed fit men to be relied upon as Judges of Truth, the remainder of the World, if there be any not reducible to one of these two sorts, is infinitely a less number than those who have been constant Witnesses to, and Assertors of the Divine Providence, and that with the loss of all other things that are most dear to them, and of life it self. And therefore I think it reasonable to infer, that though the Fathers in the former Chapter be considered onely as Witnesses of this Truth in general, that God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; yet their examples added to the convictions of our own Reason are sufficient to justify the wisdom of our choice in being religious, though we had no further motives to it than this: inasmuch as they who renounce Religion, do it either without or against their Reason, and there can be no competent evidence on their side, who do so; but the force of their examples before mentioned will be yet more considerable to engage us to imitate

imitate their patience, if we consider,

2. The great difference between their state and ours, and the far greater advantages we enjoy above them. How far their knowledge extended beyond the principle before mentioned, it is not easie, nor necessary to determine. But thus much is plain, that their condition was much more imperfect than ours under the Gospel. The knowledge they had of a future state was dark and obscure, the promises they received were mysterious and unevident; but now under the Gospel the case is much otherwise. The types, and shadows, and ceremonies of the Law, under which the promised Messias was obscurely represented of old, are now exchanged for the substance it self. Now life and immortality is brought to light by the Gospel. We have now greater demonstration of the goodness and mercy of God towards us than they had, in that he spared not his own Son, but gave him for us all. We have a better prospect of the promised reward. We have now clearer promises of the divine Spirit to assist and support us in all our Trials; and to enable us to run our Race with patience. These and many other

advantages of knowledge we enjoy. These encouragements to praise we have received, beyond what the Fathers were acquainted with. And this the Apostle refers to in the conclusion of the former Chapter, *These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises; God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* Now the inference from this consideration is very plain and obvious. For if the Fathers before the coming of our Saviour, who received not those exceeding great and precious promises which are revealed in the Gospel, did yet exercise so great degrees of Faith, so mighty a confidence and trust in God, as to endure such bitter things in obedience to him as we read they did; how strongly should this excite and provoke our zeal and fervor to follow after them in this glorious enterprize, and to run with patience the Race set before us; how should we be ashamed and blush to read the History of their sufferings, and the glory of their virtues, if we who enjoy so many advantages above them, do yet come short of their bravery and resolution, and constant obedience to the will of God.

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3. The examples of those who have gone before us in the ways of Vertue, ought to have this further influence to engage us in the like chearful discharge of our duty, inasmuch as they are witnesses of the possibility of those things that are required of us, in order to the attainment of that reward, the Crown we seek for. The hardest duties required of us have been long since accomplished by them; and accomplished with such full assurance of hope, such ravishing apprehensions of the joy set before them, as perfectly over-balanced all the difficulties they met with, and made them joyful and couragious amidst the most severe tortures. Let no man then pretend, that the commands of God are impossible to be kept; that his Laws are hard or grievous to be done, since we have seen them fulfilled in so high a manner, and that under a more imperfect dispensation than that of the Gospel, as the state of those manifestly was; nor is it a bare possibility of our task which we are taught by their example, but they are Witnesses of the loveliness of Vertue, that it is very excellent and desirable, worthy our choice and constant embraces, though it be attended

tended with greatest dangers and persecution. For if it were not so, it were not possible that all the Saints and Martyrs who have gone before us, should have expressed so constant a joy and satisfaction in what they suffered for its sake. It was a fanciful supposition of *Tully*, that if Vertue could be seen by bodily eyes, it would appear so comely and amiable, so beautiful and lovely, that men would need no other arguments to invite them to embrace it. I will not say this supposition is altogether extravagant, because it may fairly be understood of those great examples of Vertue, some of which have appeared in all Ages, to vindicate its practice from all the disadvantages under which the folly and slothfulness of men is wont to represent it. In brave and Heroick examples Vertue appears as it were clothed with flesh and blood, visible to the eyes of the most stupid and insensible; since there are none so barbarous and savage, who will not follow a truly vertuous man with reverence and applause, though they see him oft-times clouded by affliction, and oppressed by the malicious and unjust. The truth is, no kind of Arguments hath greater advantages

vantages of persuation, and leave us more without Excuse than good and vertuous Examples. Others may speak great things in commendation of Vertue, and the Reward prepared for it; but if notwithstanding they live not as they teach, there is an easie answer to be made to such Exhortations, and we may be apt to reply, Surely these men do not really believe what they endeavour to persuade us; for if they did, it would be their interest to practise Vertue as well as ours; and why do they neglect it? But when men teach us by Example as well as Doctrine, then they may urge their precepts with good assurance, and we have no excuse or pretence left, why we should not follow and imitate them.

The Saints therefore and Martyrs, who have left behind them such glorious Memorials of their obedience and faith in God, and patient sufferings for conscience sake, do herein give us the most powerful motives to a like stedfastness in our Holy Calling; inasmuch as they bear witness by their Examples, that there are no difficulties so great in the ways of Holiness, no afflictions so grievous, but that by the power of a lively and active faith, and
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by a prospect of the Joy set before us, and by the assistance of Gods grace in the discharge of our duty, they may be endured with patience and comfort, nay further, with joy and satisfaction. Let us now cast our eyes back on those great Examples of Faith and Patience recorded in the foregoing Chapter; let us behold the mighty power and efficacy of their Faith, and the bravery of their Vertues in its most afflicted state: let us call to mind the chearfulness and joy with which they trampled on, and despised the sufferings of this life present, that they might obtain a better inheritance. Let us add to these the glorious company of Apostles and Evangelists, the noble Army of Martyrs and Confessors, and innumerable companies of just men made perfect, who have departed this life in the Faith of Christ, being Witnesses to us of better promises than the Fathers had. And lastly, let us look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy set before him endured the Cross, despised the Shame, and is now set down upon the right hand of the Throne of God; and then surely, if the Apostles Argument was a reasonable motive in his days,

days, it will now be much more so, since the Cloud of Witnesse is so much increased by the Saints and Martyrs of the Christian Church. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*

S E R M.

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SERM. V.

HEB. xij. 2.

*Looking unto Jesus the Author
and Finisher of our Faith; who
for the joy that was set before
him, endured the Cross, despising
the shame, and is set down at
the right hand of the Throne
of God.*

THERE is no kind of Argument
more naturally fitted to pre-
vail upon mens minds, and to
engage their industry and di-
ligence in any enterprize whatsoever, than
the example of others who have gone
before them; whose wisdom and vertue
they have in reverence; who have per-
formed

formed the like undertaking with honour and success. The opinion we have of their wisdom and vertue, makes us think it not unreasonable for us to follow their steps, and imitate their practice; and the success of their endeavours takes away all those faint excuses which Sloth and Idleness are apt to suggest to us. We cannot then pretend that it is an impossible task we are persuaded to, when we see before our eyes the examples of others of like frame with our selves, who have already performed it with chearfulness and joy.

The Apostle therefore well knowing that the Profession of Christianity was to be attended with many difficulties and dangers, and that our Saviour had made it a necessary qualification of all that would be his Disciples, *to take up the Cross and follow him*; to prepare the minds of his new converted Hebrews against all discouragements whatsoever, that might withdraw them from their stedfastness in the Faith they had embraced, in the foregoing Chapter of the Epistle, he largely represents to them the many examples of the Patriarchs of old, whose Seed they were; of the holy Prophets, whose Writings

things they had received; of all the Wor-
thies recorded in Sacred Story; whose
Praises they had been instructed in; that
all these, in confidence that God would
reward their Obedience and Faith in ano-
ther life, though he suffered them to
be evil intreated here, had patiently un-
dergone the most barbarous cruelties,
which the wit or malice of men could
exercise upon them. Some of them were
stoned and sawn in sunder; some of them
wandered about, being destitute, affli-
cted, tormented; but yet these, and many
other kinds of calamities they chearfully
submitted to, not accepting deliverance,
that they might obtain a better resurre-
ction. And then applying their examples
to the state of those first Christians, he
gives them to understand, that if the Fa-
thers before recited by the power of their
Faith were enabled to endure such things
as these, then surely they who had recei-
ved far better promises ought not to fall
short of their patience, and resolution,
and constant perseverance in their holy
Profession, though they should be expo-
sed to many Trials and Persecutions for it.

This application he makes in the words
before the Text; *Wherefore, seeing we also*

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are

are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. But because the duty of Patience under Sufferings is that which of all others we are naturally most averse to, that there might be nothing wanting to confirm their resolution to go on cheerfully in the Race set before them, he proceeds in the Text to raise their thoughts to the contemplation of a far more eminent and illustrious example, whom they ought always to have in their eye, as the best pattern of their Obedience, and affording the strongest motives and encouragement to it: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Considering the words with this dependence, they are a prevailing argument and motive to engage us to imitate our Saviour, as in all other parts of a holy conversation; so more particularly in the patient suffering of those afflictions and calamities which befall us in this life. Which duty, though it have a more peculiar

cular reference to the state of the Primitive Christians, who were continually exposed to the most unsupportable calamities for their profession of Christianity; yet we are not to persuade our selves that we in these days are wholly exempt from our share in it. Though open Persecutions are not now felt among us, yet all that will live godly, have many Trials and Temptations to oppose themselves against, many difficulties and dangers to struggle with, many enemies to withstand through the whole course of their pilgrimage, who are always active and busie to hinder our progress in our Christian Race, and to defeat us of our Reward and Crown. Though we are not now brought before Kings and Rulers for the sake of Christ, though we cannot now be tempted to a total Apostasie from our Christian Profession, to an open denial of the Lord that bought us, yet still we are exposed to many temptations which are apt to draw us from our uprightness, and to betray us into those evil habits and customs which are inconsistent with the Faith which we outwardly profess, and with the Salvation we hope for. We have therefore need of great watchful-

ness and care, and constant resolution, if we would preserve our innocency and integrity amidst so many and dangerous temptations. We have need of patience, if we would deny our selves all those irregular gratifications, to which the Devil, the World, and our own hearts Lust are apt to entice and invite us; and therefore the consideration of our Saviours example of Patience under Sufferings may still be very useful to us, though we be not called to suffer Persecution for his names sake. And then for Persecution it self, though it be a case very seldom happens, yet such is the condition of Christianity, that every one that undertakes the profession of it, must at least, in preparation of soul, be ready to lay down his life, rather than renounce it. Now in order to confirm our constancy and resolution in our Holy Calling, notwithstanding any temptations we meet with in the World, notwithstanding any afflictions or calamities that may befall us, the Apostle recommends this as a most effectual means, to *look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame,*
and

and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In which words the blessed J E S U S is represented unto us under a two-fold Character, each of which affords very proper and suitable Arguments to ingage us in imitation of him.

I. We are to look unto him, as the Author of our Faith. This is in Greek *ἀρχηγός*, which is a Military term, signifying a Captain and Leader, one who hath gone before us with bravery and resolution, and hath commanded us to follow his steps. This is further explained in the following part of the Verse, *who, for the joy set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame.* If we look unto Jesus under this Character, the Apostles Argument is very plain and convincing; that since the Author and Captain of our Salvation did not refuse himself to undergo the most unsupportable calamities of this life, and to suffer a painful and most ignominious death, in prospect of that exceeding great reward which he saw prepared for him; neither ought we, who pretend to be his Disciples and Souldiers refuse to follow him in the same track, that we may partake with him in the

same joy. Especially if we consider,

2. That he is not onely the Captain of our Faith, but the finisher and perfecter of it. This is in Greek *πληρωτής*, that is, the Rewarder of our Faith. This is further exprest in the latter clause of the Verse, where the Apostle declaring the issue and event of our Saviours sufferings, tells us, *he is set down on the right hand of the throne of God.* Which words exprest these two things:

1. That our Saviour hath himself received the full Reward of his humiliation and sufferings, *being set down at the right hand of God.*

2. And which is consequent from that, that he is now endued with sufficient authority and power abundantly to reward those who suffer with him, and after his example.

I shall begin with the first of these Characters, and shall consider our Saviour as *Author and Captain of our Faith*, the great Pattern and Example of Patience, *who, for the joy set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame.*

And

And to shew the force of the Apostles Argument,

1. I shall first consider the sufferings themselves which our Saviour underwent, expressed here by two comprehensive words, the C R O S S and the S H A M E.

2. The manner of his enduring them.

3. I shall endeavour to shew the influence of his Example to engage us to follow and imitate him.

To begin with his Sufferings themselves.

Though the Cross and the Shame here spoken of, do principally refer to the great and unparallel'd instance of our Saviours Sufferings, which was the consummation of all the rest, even his painful and ignominious Death; yet I conceive they may not unfitly be extended to the whole History of them, from his Birth unto that very time. If therefore we take a short view of our Saviours whole life and actions, we shall easily discern

that the prophecy was thoroughly fulfilled, wherein he is represented *as a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief*. Not to mention the meanness of his Birth, the poverty of his condition, the early Persecution raised against him by *Herod*, nor those other accidents that beset him in his younger years. Not to mention these things, I shall confine my discourse to those instances of Suffering which beset him after he began to shew himself to *Israel*, and by signs and wonders to declare himself to be the Son of God, the true *Messias*, that according to the Prophets was to come into the World. And I shall represent them under these two heads answerable to those in the Text, the great ignominy and reproach which was cast upon his person through the whole course of his Ministry; and then the bitter and painful circumstances that went before, and accompanied his Death and Passion.

And first, if we consider the quality of our Saviours person, that he was the true *Messias*, so long foretold by the Prophets, and at that very time expected by the Jews; if we consider the great and undeniable proof that he gave of these things,

things, *viz.* the fulfilling all the prophecies that spake of him so punctually and so particularly; his delivering such a doctrine to them that carried with it all the evidence of a divine authority; his doing such mighty works among them, which by their own confession no man could do, unless God were with him, his healing the sick, and curing diseases and casting out Devils, giving eyes to the blind, restoring the lame, raising the dead, all which could be the effect of no lesser cause, than the Almighty power of God, attesting the truth of what he spake, and the authority of his mission. He that considers these things might reasonably expect, that so divine a person at his first appearance should have been entertained with the greatest demonstration of joy and triumph; and doubtless had the Jews themselves been demanded before-hand, what honour was fit to be given to their long looked for Messias when he came, they could not have contrived any ways of respect suitable to their great apprehensions of him; they would have thought no kind of homage too great to be paid to the person whom God had sent to them so immediately, and upon
so

so advantageous a message. But behold on the contrary, when this Prince and Saviour did at length appear in the fulness of time, though there was no testimony wanting to confirm him to be the very CHRIST, yet because he came not with outward pomp and splendor, had none of the gilded Pageantries of the World to attend him in his appearance, this prejudice alone was sufficient with them to over-balance the strongest demonstration that could possibly be given. *Is not this the Carpenters Son?* they thought sufficient confutation of all the mighty things he spake and did. So that in stead of those joyful acclamations with which he ought to have been entertained, in stead of that honour and respect that was due to his high Character, he met with nothing but Scorn and Derision, Ignominy and Reproach; and that in those very cases, wherein they ought to have paid him the most profound homage and adoration. For instance in the execution of his prophetick Office. Though the doctrine he taught was the most divine and heavenly that ever was made known to the Sons of men: though by their own confession he spake among them as never

ver man spake before; though he so often confuted the great Doctors out of the Law and the Prophets, which they thought themselves the best Interpreters of; yet so far were they from yielding to the conviction, or owning his Commission, that they took occasion rather from thence to contrive his ruine, and to represent him under the odious character of one that endeavoured to overthrow the Law and the Prophets, which he came most eminently to fulfil. Again, when he went about his Fathers business, to seek and to save that which was lost, and for that end vouchsafed to converse with Publicans and Sinners, that he might reduce them from their evil ways; though this was really an instance of the greatest goodness and compassion towards them; yet for this they revile him, making it an occasion of the foulest calumny, crying out of him as a Glutton and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners. Lastly, to name no more, when he went about doing good, curing diseases, healing all that were oppressed of the Devil, who could expect but that such mighty instances of his power and goodness should have extorted from them the most grate-

grateful acknowledgments? But in stead of this, some of them desire him to depart out of their Coasts; others revile him as though he did all these mighty and inimitable works by the help of the Devil, casting out Devils by *Belzebub* the Prince of them. Thus the unspotted innocency of his life, the purity of his doctrine, the mighty power which he shewed in confirmation of it, and the many good deeds done among them to all that stood in need and craved his assistance; all which were in their own nature admirably fitted to excite their love and veneration of him; all these were made use of by the Jews to the quite contrary purpose, and became the occasions of the greatest calumny and malice towards him. But I hasten to the great instance of our Saviours Sufferings, even the bitter and most painful circumstances that went before and accompanied his Death and Passion.

When the appointed time was come that the Messias was to be cut off, our Saviour well knowing the approach of it, sought no means to escape the danger, because he knew it was his heavenly Fathers pleasure that he should suffer such things,

things, and that otherwise the Scriptures would not be fulfilled. He therefore prepared his Disciples for it, giving them warning that one of them should betray him, and that the hour was now come. Having therefore eaten the Pasover with his Disciples, and put an end to that Ceremony which was figurative of himself, and having instituted his last Supper to be kept for ever in remembrance of him, he goes out to the Mount of Olives, there to be in readiness to meet those that sought him, to take away his life. There it was that our blessed Saviour, out of deep apprehensions of that great weight of afflictions that was now to be laid upon him, that he was to bear our grief, and carry our sorrows, began to be exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and fell into that bitter agony, wherein he sweat drops of blood. And here what words can express, what thoughts can sufficiently conceive the greatness of those pains that beset our Saviour, when the very apprehensions of their approach made so deep an impression upon the Son of God himself, and put him in so strange an agony, and extorted from him the earnest petition which he made *Mat. xxvj. 39. O my Father,*

Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. Sure it is that never was such height of malice exprest against one innocent person as was against our Saviour, nor was affliction ever aggravated with such grievous circumstances as his was. He was betrayed by one of his own Disciples, betrayed by one who had been all along a witness of his mighty Works, a hearer of his doctrine, a constant partaker of those benefits which he so freely bestowed on all; betrayed by him who had so often eat at his Table; betraid by that very action whereby he was wont to express his homage to him. Being thus betraid into the hands of Sinners, they deal with him as the vilest Malefactor, they hurry him to the high Priests house, where the Scribes and the Elders condemn him of Blasphemy, for no other reason, but for affirming the truth to them, that he was the Son of God, which they could not disprove. Then they go on to the most insolent expressions of scorn and contempt of him; they spit in his face, and buffeted him; others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, *Prophecie unto us, who is it that smote*

smote thee? After this infamous manner was the Son of God treated by these unreasonable and wicked men, to whom he came to do the greatest good, had they been capable of receiving it. Their malice did not rest here. Though they had offered him all the vilest indignities, yet this was not sufficient to satisfy their rage. Nothing would do that, but the shedding his most precious and innocent blood. And because it was not in their own power to pass the sentence of death upon him, they being now under the Roman yoke, therefore they hasten the next morning to bring him before *Pilate* the Roman Governour, to demand sentence of death from him. And here, that they might give some plausible reason of their malice, they invent a new accusation against him, charging him with a new kind of crime, that he was guilty of Treason, making himself a King. When *Pilate* was unsatisfied with their proof of this, they supply their want of proof with the loudness of their clamours, crying out, *Crucifie him, crucifie him.* And because *Pilate* was still unwilling to imbrue his hands with this innocent blood, demanding still a further reason of their pro-

proceedings against him, saying, Why, what evil hath he done? he gained no other answer but importunate clamours, and they cried out the more, *Let him be crucified.* And doubtless the injustice of these clamours was very evident to Pilate; though none of the justest Judges, he was yet desirous to clear himself of this guilt; insomuch that he washed his hands before the multitude, protesting his innocency as to the blood of that just man, and charged them with it. And here we may behold the strange precipitancy of these mens malice, that rather than not obtain one single design of mischief upon the most innocent person in the World, they wilfully devote themselves and their posterity to ruine, crying out, *His blood be upon us and our children.*

O most horrid and dreadful imprecation! For who can conceive the infinite horror of their guilt, and the terrible vengeance they called for upon themselves, when he considers how pretious and inestimable the value of that blood was, which they was so hasty to spill? What remains now, but that having extorted from Pilate the most unjust sentence,

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tence, they should now proceed to the execution of it? But lest his death too should want any circumstance which might aggravate his grief and their malice, they contrived all imaginable ways to heap more indignities upon him. Then they stripped him, and scourged him, and mocked, and put on him a Crown of Thorns, a Scarlet Robe, and a Reed in his hand. What should I mention the further mockeries they used towards him? the prodigious cruelty of the torments they put him to; nailing his tender hands and feet to the Infamous Tree, and leaving the whole weight of his Body to be supported even by those wounds. In these sad circumstances of disgrace and pain did the HOLY JESUS suffer, which though they were the most sharp and bitter which the wit or malice of men could invent, had yet a farther aggravation, which infinitely exceeds all that we can speak or think: for besides the extrem violence of his bodily pains, besides the most barbarous indignities and affronts offered to him, there was yet a far greater weight of sorrow hung upon his soul, than his enemies could bring upon him: the burden of our sins

then lay heavy upon him, and the weight of our iniquity pressed his soul down; and this we may easily conceive was the true cause of that bitter agony and bloody sweat which he was in before apprehension. This was that which, while he hung upon the Cross, made him cry out in the bitterness of his Spirit, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And now let us look unto JESUS under these doleful circumstances, and consider if ever sorrow was like unto his sorrow. That we may therefore more effectually be moved to an imitation of our Saviour,

Proceed we now to the second thing proposed, to consider after what manner the HOLY JESUS demeaned himself under these Agonies; *For the joy set before him, he endured the Cross, despising the shame.* In which words is expressed the deportment of our Saviour, thus much at least, that his undergoing these calamities was free and voluntary, that he did it out of choice, *for the joy set before him.* But what is wanting in the Text may easily be supplied out of other places in holy Scripture: *Isaiah liij. 7.* The Prophet describing the manner of his sufferings

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ferings tells us, *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a Sheep before the Shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* Which prediction was so exactly and punctually fulfilled by him, as nothing could be more. For notwithstanding all the heavy pressures that lay on him, who ever heard one murmuring or discontented word, one least complaint against the method of Gods dealing with him? But in the most bitter circumstances of all, though he prayed for a deliverance from the evils he felt, and from those he foresaw were ready to ensue; yet this was done with the most perfect resignation of himself to his Fathers will, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* Our Saviour was not of that sort of men, who pretend to be unmoved by any pain or trouble. His patience was no stupid insensibility of the things he felt; no, he was of as tender sense as other men, and the pains he felt were such as would have disturbed the evenness of the stoutest Stoick, awakened the most resolute. But in this the eminency of our Saviours patience appeared,

that notwithstanding the Agonies he felt were so full of anguish and sorrow, he could yet in the midst of these tortures entirely submit himself to his heavenly Fathers will, saying, *Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.* Nor are the instances of our Saviours patience less remarkable, which he shewed in his behaviour towards men. For notwithstanding those many affronts and indignities which were offered to him from that ungrateful people the Jews, notwithstanding all the malice and violence they pursued him with, he never uttered one angry or revengeful word against them. *When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* Nay, so far was he from making any least return to those many injuries he received from them, that even in the midst of his affliction, in that unconceivable anguish which he felt hanging upon the Cross, he omitted not to pray for forgiveness for them, saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* After this manner did the HOLY JESUS suffer, bearing all reproaches and indignities from

from men with the greatest meekness, answering not a word to all their calumnies; bearing the most piercing and violent pains with the greatest patience and submission to his Fathers Will; and this he did as S. Peter tells us, *Leaving us an Example, that we should follow his steps.* Which leads me to the third thing to be considered, the Influence of our Saviours Example to engage us in imitation of him; and this will appear many ways.

I. If we consider the greatness of those sufferings which our Saviour underwent; they were such as infinitely exceed all that we can possibly be exposed to, as may appear by what hath been already said. If therefore God was pleased to lay so great a burden upon his beloved Son, in whom he was well-pleased, and if the Son of God were willing cheerfully to endure such bitter things, because he knew it was his heavenly Fathers will, and that otherwise the Scriptures could not be fulfilled; how unreasonable must it needs be for us to murmur and repine at those lesser afflictions, which God may call us to; and yet, alas, how apt are we to complain and murmur at every little accident and disappointment that befalls

us here? How forward are we to complain of the unequal distribution of humane affairs, and to think our selves hardly dealt with? and though possibly we do not make complaint directly against Heaven, nor call in question the justice of Gods providence towards us, yet the instruments of his providence, the men he suffers to afflict us, seldom escape our severest censure.

But now to qualify our minds in these cases, and to restrain our too passionate resentments of the injuries we meet with, let us take the Apostles advice, and look unto *Jesus*; what he suffered and after what manner. Are any of those affronts and indignities that have been offered us, in the least degree answerable to those contumelious usages which the HOLY JESUS was exposed to? Are any of our calamities comparable to those bitter pains which he endured upon the Cross? Or is there any sorrow can so deeply affect our soul, as that unconceivable anguish of his did, which made him cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* but yet notwithstanding the infinite weight of his afflictions, the piercing violence of his pain, we find not the least
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syllable of complaint proceed from him against this proceeding of his Father towards him; no word of reproach or resentment against his most barbarous and implacable Enemies. Let us therefore look unto J E S U S under these circumstances, and then we cannot but be sensible how ill it becomes us who pretend to be his Disciples, and call our selves by his name, to be so angry and impatient under those light afflictions we are called to.

2. Our Saviours Sufferings have this farther influence to engage us in imitation of his Patience, because the perfect innocency of his life had merited none of those things. *He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners:* And therefore might justly have claimed exemption from those miseries he under-went, and have withdrawn his shoulders from bearing the heavy burden which it pleased his Father to lay on him. If he therefore when he might have avoided those calamities that befel him, when he could have called for more than twelve Legions of Angels to rescue him from his danger, chose rather to submit

to all those indignities he foresaw would be heaped upon him in obedience to his heavenly Father; how much rather ought we without repining quietly to sit down under the afflicting hand of God? we, who can suffer nothing in this World so grievous which we have not deserved; we, whose sins do every day provoke Gods indignation against us. What rational Plea can we have, why God should not use the most severe chastisements upon us? And certainly, if God spared not his own Son, but gave him up to those calamities he had not deserved; we have all the reason in the World to submit to him, notwithstanding any trouble he brings upon us; and to take up the confession of the penitent Thief upon the Cross, *We indeed suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*, but the HOLY JESUS had done nothing amiss.

3. A further Argument which the consideration of our Saviours Sufferings suggests to us, to engage us to a like patient submission to the will of God, maybe taken from the end and design of his Sufferings, which was the greatest design of goodness and love to us, that could be undertaken: and therefore ought to engage us
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to a suitable return of obedience and love to him, though it were to die for his sake as he did for ours, and to suffer the most severe Trials that it shall please him to appoint us to undergo. When all mankind, like Sheep, had gone astray, when they had all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and made themselves liable to the utmost severity of his anger and justice; when we were dead in trespasses and sins, and were in no capacity to help our selves, or contrive our own recovery; then it pleased the Son of God out of his tender compassion and inimitable love to mankind, to come down from heaven the habitation of Glory, to take upon him our flesh, to submit to all the miseries and sorrows of humane life; and lastly to suffer the most painful and ignominious death of the Cross, to redeem us from the bondage and dominion of sin, and from the dreadful effects of it, and to make us capable of life and salvation. Blessed Lord! what was man, that thou shouldst be so mindful of him? what is the Son of man that thou shouldst so regard him, as to debase thy self in such a manner, and to submit to all the vilest indignities, and
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most unsupportable pains, to rescue him from that misery which by his own wilful and unreasonable choice he had brought upon himself.

O the inestimable riches of love which the HOLY JESUS expressed towards us in these his sufferings! and now what shall we render for all his goodness! is there any thing which we can be unwilling to do for the sake of him, who hath done and suffered so much for us? We see then that the obligation of our Saviours example to engage us to follow him in the patient suffering those calamities that befall us, is very plain and evident, because his Sufferings were undertaken for our sake and benefit, and he requires this testimony of our love and gratitude for so unspeakable mercy towards us, that we also should take up our Cross chearfully, and follow him wheresoever we are called to it.

4. The consideration of our Saviours Sufferings and Death, are a further Argument to a like Patience under and submission to the will of God, because they are a strong evidence of that future reward that is prepared for those who continue faithful to the end, and run with

patience the Christian Race set before them. Our Saviour while he was yet alive promised many Blessings and Rewards to his Disciples and Followers, most of which were to have their accomplishment in another life; in the mean time he foretold them, that in this World they should have tribulation, and that they must be always ready to forsake Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, yea and their own lives also, if they would be his Disciples. However, that there was a certain reward laid up for them in Heaven, which they should not fail to partake of, if they continued stedfast in this Faith, and finished their course with patience. Now our Saviour could give no greater evidence of the truth of those promises he made to them, and of the sincerity of his intentions in pressing this duty of Patience under Sufferings, than that he himself was willing to go before them in this so painful and laborious an enterprize, and to endure the worst of those evils which he foretold should befall them in prospect of the joy set before him, which he promised they should partake of. Had
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he not undoubted assurance of the truth of those things he spake to his Disciples, he would not doubtless have exposed himself to so many hazards for affirming them; but the assurance he had was strong and convincing, such as he knew he could not be mistaken in. And therefore in *John xvij. 2.* he speaks of his own power, which he was to receive upon account of his sufferings, with the same assurance, as though it had been already accomplished. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* This our Saviour spake before his Passion, which argued a mighty confidence he had that he should receive this reward of his humiliation and Sufferings, that he should give eternal life to as many as his Father had given him; and this was *that joy set before him*, expressed in the latter clause of the Verse by *his sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God*, in prospect of which *he endured the Cross, despising the shame.* And we have all the reason in the World to believe that he who could endure so much ignominy, shame and pain, for the obtaining this Reward, was both sufficiently certain of the reality

ry of it, that it would be made good to him upon the accomplishment of his Sufferings; and likewise that this joy set before him was of inestimable value, and far exceeding those tribulations and sorrows he undertook in order to it. And lastly, that he could not deceive his Followers with the promise of an imaginary Joy, since he did himself endure such real and unexpressible pains to obtain it for, and confirm it to them.

The sum of this Argument is briefly this: Our blessed Saviour endured the Cross, despising the shame in full assurance of the certainty of the Joy set before him, and of the inestimable value of it above the proportion of his Sufferings; and therefore that we also ought to imitate his Patience, being well assured by his Example, that the light afflictions of this life, which endure but a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed; and that if we suffer with the HOLY JESUS we shall be also glorified together.

Thus far have I endeavoured to represent the force of the Apostles Argument

gument from the Sufferings of our Saviour to engage us to imitate his Patience, and to suffer with him when Gods calls us to it; but we must not confine the influence of our Saviours Sufferings to this single duty.

The Race set before us, mentioned in the former Verse, may fairly be understood of the whole Course of a Christian Conversation; and our Saviours Sufferings and Death have doubtless a very great efficacy to oblige us not only to the patient enduring Afflictions and Calamities, but to an universal and impartial obedience to the will of God. For with what face can we look up unto J E S U S, and consider the intolerable weight of sorrow which he endured for the sins of men, and not be ashamed and blush again to be guilty of any of those sins, which put the Son of God to such shame and pain? Or how can we call to mind his boundless compassion and love to us in enduring such things for our sake, without being effectually moved to render to him all possible demonstration of our thankfulness and love for all his benefits? Which we cannot better

better express, than by a sincere and constant obedience to the precepts of the Gospel, and by walking before him in all holiness and godliness of living. Which that we may all do, God of his infinite mercy grant, for the sake and merits of our blessed Saviour; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, and praise, and glory, henceforth and for evermore. *Amen.*

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better expreſs, than by a ſingle and
 conſtant obedience to the precept of the
 Goſpel, and by walking before him in
 all holineſs and goodneſs of living. Which
 that we may, all tho' God of his infinite
 mercy grant, for the ſake and merits of
 our bleſſed ſaviour; to whom with the
 Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all ho-
 nour and praiſe, and glory, hereforth
 and for evermore. Amen.

S E R M. VI.

I COR. V. 10.

*We must all appear before the
Judgment Seat of Christ, that
every one may receive the
things done in his body, accor-
ding to that he hath done, whe-
ther it be good or bad.*

ONe great priviledge and per-
fection of Mankind; whereby
they are distinguished from,
and far excel the Beasts that
perish is this; that whereas other Crea-
tures are either wholly determined in
their actions, by outward and necessary
causes, or at least are led on by those ob-
jects onely which are present, and work

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immediately upon their senses, without any prospect of, or regard to future and remote events; Men onely by comparing causes and effects are able to make an estimate and value of future good and evil, and accordingly to determine their present actions and choice, in proportion to those ends which they propose to themselves; and therefore though all men naturally seek after good, and are averse to those things which are painful and unpleasant; yet if they are well assured that what is now pleasing and delightful to them, will be the certain cause of future and more lasting evils than can be recompensed by any present and transitory pleasure. This consideration to those that use their reason is sufficient to put a check to, and divert them from any present enjoyments, which will in the event be dangerous and hurtful. On the contrary, by the same principle men may be encouraged to undergo many difficulties and hardships, if they can be convinced that their present sufferings shall be recompensed with a suitable reward and satisfaction for the time to come. And therefore no kind of Arguments are more naturally fitted to persuade men to the
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practice of Vertue and Goodness, and to discourage them from the contrary ways of Sin and Wickedness, than a due consideration of those several ends which they lead to, and of those Rewards and Punishments which will be the unavoidable events of them. And accordingly no kind of persuasions are more frequent in the Gospel, than those which are taken from an expectation of a judgment to come, and from those incomparable rewards which will then be the portion of the Righteous, and the unspeakable miseries which will be the lot of the Wicked and Disobedient. And this is that which the Apostle particularly insists on in this place, as the ground of his persuasions, *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which is done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.* In these words there are many circumstances of great weight and moment, worthy of our most serious consideration; which I shall briefly represent to you.

1. Here is the certainty of a Judgment to come, declared in these words, *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.*

2. Here is the person before whom we must appear, it is *the Judgment Seat of Christ.* He, who was before our Mediator and Advocate, who came to redeem us from our iniquities, and to make us capable of being happy in another life, will then be our Judge, and will actually dispense those rewards he promised to those, for whom they are prepared, and will also be the severe avenger of those who would not be reclaimed.

3. Here are expressed the persons that must appear, *We*, we the same men that are now alive in the body, though our earthly tabernacles be dissolved, though our bodies die and see corruption, yet *we* our selves must again appear. The same Almighty power, which at first framed us in our Mothers Wombs, and curiously fashioned all the parts of our body, though they be dissolved into dust and variously scattered over the earth, will again restore them to life, and we shall

shall again appear, the same men that we were before; For *we* must appear and no other.

4. Here is expressed the universality of the appearance, *We must all appear*; all men that ever lived or shall live upon the Earth, high or low, rich or poor, no order or degree of men excepted, we must all then make our appearance.

5. There is something considerable in the appearance it self. Doctor *Hammond* interprets the Phrase, *We must appear*, onely with analogy to Tribunals of Justice among men; that as Prisoners at the Bar are wont to be set in a conspicuous place in order to their Trial; so we also must give our appearance before the Judgement Seat of Christ. But the word *φανερωθῶμεν* hath a more important signification, and must be understood not onely of our being actually present at Gods Tribunal, but we must appear or be made manifest, as the same word is interpreted in the following Verse; and then the Apostle means thus much, that all our hidden actions and secret designs, which are now undiscovered by men,

shall then at the Judgement Seat of Christ be made manifest and laid open to us before God and all his holy Angels. We have now many ways to hide our selves, and to disguise our actions from the knowledge of men; we can now put on the Mask and Garb of a Righteous man, and appear as such to the World, when our hearts are full of wickedness and deceit: but at the Judgment of the Great Day all these arts will avail us nothing; our false pretences will then be discovered, our disguise pulled off, our hypocrisie made visible and manifest, inasmuch as all things are naked and open before him, with whom we have to do: *and we must all appear.*

6. Here is the method that will be used at the Judgment Seat of Christ, *Every one shall receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

7. Here is the use S. Paul makes of all these considerations, *Knowing therefore these terrors of the Lord:* and being assured how dreadful this appearance and the event of it will be, *we persuade men that*

that they would now behave themselves as men that must then appear; but to insist particularly on all these circumstances, would be too large an Exercise of your Patience. I shall therefore confine my Discourse to these three things.

1. I shall endeavour to remind you of those grounds and reasons by which we may be assured of a Judgment to come; that we must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2. I shall consider the method of proceeding at the Day of Judgment; *Every man shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

3. I shall draw some inferences that may be of use to us in the government of our lives. First of the truth and certainty of a Judgment to come. And this will appear upon these following accounts.

1. From the dictates and testimony of our own Conscience.

2. From the Nature of God and his Attributes.

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3. From the concurrent testimony and belief of all Nations.

4. From the particular revelation of this truth in holy Scripture.

1. If we look into the secrets of our own souls, and examine the natural powers we are endued with, they will afford us great evidence that there is a Judgment to come, when we shall be called to account for our actions here, and be rewarded or punished according to them. The knowledge of good and evil, and the obligation to do one and eschew the other, is naturally written in the Soul of Man; nor can any man be wicked without violence to his own reason and best faculties. Every man bears about with him a secret Monitor in his bosom, which upon the temptations to evil doth faithfully forewarn him of it; and upon the commission of evil doth afflict his soul with a sense of guilt, and with a fearful expectation of punishment due upon it. On the contrary, there is a secret joy and satisfaction naturally springs up in the soul of a good man, which is an exceeding support and comfort

fort to him in the discharge of his duty ; which enables him to bear many difficulties and oppositions which oft-times attend him in the practice of Vertue ; his conscience breeding in him a strong confidence and assurance of some future recompence for his good deeds. Now that conscience is thus active and busie to forewarn men of the evil which they are about to do, and to set before them in order the evils they have done, and to support them in doing good, every man, that gives himself the leisure to attend to the motions of his own mind, may be convinced by his own experience. Or if we would rather learn from the experience of others, it were easie to produce a crowd of Witnesses, which give us large descriptions of the unsupportable burden a troubled spirit, and the great comfort and security of a conscience void of offence. And now would we know the true ground and foundation of those hopes and fears, which the conscience naturally suggests to us according to our actions whether good or bad, there is no sufficient reason of them can be assigned but this, that they are the voice of God and Nature forewarning

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us of another state after this; when all men shall be recompensed according to that they have done here. For that the fears and disquiets of a guilty conscience are indeed the effects of Nature, and are not grounded upon the apprehension of temporal punishment, or of the Laws of men, as some vainly suppose, is sufficiently evident in that those persons, who have been beyond the reach and above the fears of any earthly Tribunal, have yet been the greatest examples of this force of conscience. The Story of *Ca- ligula* is in every bodies mouth, and is indeed a signal instance of this truth. He, who was possessed with so unlimited a Sovereignty over a great part of the *Known World*, and exercised his power with so extravagant a cruelty, was yet upon every flash of Lightning and clap of Thunder awakened to a sense and fearful apprehension of the power and justice of that God, whom at other times he was wont to defie. But not to dwell upon a single instance, a further evidence that these Fears are the effects of Nature, may be gathered from hence, that the sting of conscience is most remarkable in those actions, which are done in secret
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and far removed from the knowledge of men. For though we seek the darkest retirements, where no mortal eye can trace our steps, or behold our doings, yet there our conscience is as a thousand Witnesses, continually upbraiding us with what we have done, and afflicting us with terrors, which can proceed from nothing else but from a secret conviction of soul that there is a God, whose power and knowledge reaches to all places, even to our most secret retirements, and who will one day bring upon us punishments proportionable to our deservings. I will not insist longer upon this Argument, than to take notice that *S. Paul* himself seems to urge it to this very purpose, *Rom. ij. 14.* when speaking of the Gentiles to whom God had made no particular revelation of his will as he had to the Jews; yet notwithstanding he tells us, that they also should be judged as others were; inasmuch as they had the law of conscience written in their hearts, and had from thence sufficient reason to expect that God would call them to account for the violation of it, and reward those who did obey it. *The Gentiles, which have not the law, are a law unto themselves,*

selves, and shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean time accusing, or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of all men.

x 2. Besides the dictates and testimony of our own mind, if we consider the Nature of God and his Attributes, together with our necessary dependance on him, this will give us further assurance that there is a further judgment to be expected. God, who gave us our being, and doth continually preserve and support us in it, who hath endued us with so many excellent perfections above other Creatures, hath certainly the justest right to our obedience and service. And accordingly he hath given Laws to Mankind for the government of our lives, Laws agreeable to his own nature, Laws that are holy, and just, and good; and that none should plead ignorance of these Laws, he hath as was observed, written them in their souls, and stampd upon them sufficient evidence of their divine authority and obligation. And can we think the All-wise Creator hath done all this in vain? Can we

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we persuade our selves that these divine impressions upon our soul, these notices of the will of God were implanted in our nature to no purpose at all? No surely, the natural promulgation of the divine Laws is alone sufficient evidence that he expects and requires obedience to them; and that according to our observance or neglect of them, he will one day either reward or punish us. One of the first and most natural notions of God is, that he is a rewarder of the good and vertuous. And this belief *S. Paul* requires as antecedent to all religious worship of him. *He that cometh to God must believe, that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.* And if we must believe him a rewarder of the good, we must upon the same ground of Reason believe, that he is also a punisher of the bad. Now if we look abroad into the World, it is easie to observe, that the distribution of humane affairs in this life, hath very little appearance of that universal and impartial Justice, which we have reason to believe God will exercise towards the Sons of men. It is very plain, that many men suffer in this World for their vertue and integrity; and that
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others to the contrary, raise themselves to a great degree of prosperity by wickedness and oppression. When therefore we see some men prosper in their Villany, others afflicted for their Piety, what can we conclude, but that the Judge of all the Earth hath appointed another time and place wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness, and recompense all men according to their deserving? It is true indeed, God doth many times in this life exert his power in the punishment of some notorious Villanies. There are many remarkable revolutions which happen in the World, which carry with them very signal evidence of a divine Providence and Power presiding over humane affairs. But the instances of this kind, are very few in comparison with the great wickedness of Mankind: and therefore we are not to look upon the judgments that befall men in this life, as the compleat execution of the divine Vengeance; onely that they are so many remembrancers to awaken men into a sense of that justice, which will one day equally appear to all. God is pleased many times to make his power known in the exemplary punishment

nishment of some men in this life, sometimes for their own amendment that they may escape the Wrath to come; sometimes for examples to others, that they may see it and fear, and remember that the MOST HIGH ruleth among the children of men; but still the full execution of his justice is reserved to another life: and there we must expect that he will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or bad.

3. A further evidence of a Judgment to come may be taken from the concurrent testimony and belief of all Nations. The many Religions of the Heathen, though disagreeing infinitely in other things, yet do all consent in this belief, that there is another state after this, when all men shall be rewarded or punished as they have done in this. Hence arose the many Fables of their Poets concerning the punishment men underwent in Hell, and their descriptions of *Elyzium*, which they supposed to be the seat of happy souls, who had lived here holy and innocent. Hence it was that those good Heathens, who were conscious to themselves of having lived up to the light they had,
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were so undaunted and couragious at the approach of death, being firmly persuaded that their souls should overlive their bodies, and that they should enjoy the presence of God, and the society of good and vertuous men that had gone before them. Thus *Pythagoras* taught his Scholars, that if they lived vertuously here, when they came to leave the body they should go to Heaven, and become like God, and should be no more liable to death. Thus *Socrates* said of himself when he was going to die, that he should go to a just God, and to men better than any living; and that after death it was much better with good men than with the bad. Many expressions to this purpose may be gathered from the Writings of the ancient Heathens, which are sufficient intimation of this belief, that there were rewards and punishments to be expected in another life, according to our actions whether good or bad. Now that this belief and expectation of a future state should be thus firmly received by all the several Parties in Religion, by men of all Nations and Sects, though they disagreed infinitely in other things, must be groundd upon some certain Prin-

Principles of Reason which are common to all men, or else must be the effect of some early revelation made by God in the beginning, before the several Nations were dispersed over the Earth. Which of these may be the true account of this universal consent in this matter, it is not easie to determine; but whichever it be, the inference will be certain, that there is a Judgment to come, because all Nations have agreed in the expectation of it. For if they agreed in this Persuasion from the force of natural Principles, there can be no greater evidence of the truth of any rational deduction, than that all men that use their reason should argue alike, and agree in the same conclusion; and could such an Argumentation deceive, we could have little encouragement to believe any thing upon the testimony of our Faculties.

Again, If this were the effect of some early revelation made to men when they were yet few in number, and retained in the dispersion of Nations, and still preserved, notwithstanding the gross ignorance they fell into, as to other matters. This must be a great evidence,

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of the clearness and evidence of that revelation at first, and must consequently much confirm us in the belief of it. And indeed it is not improbable that the rational Evidences of this Truth of a Judgment to come, might have been confirmed to the first Ages of the World by some divine revelations, which were communicated to all, and thence derived and propagated through all the several Religions and Superstitions which afterward were entertained by the Heathen World.

It is not to be doubted but that Noah understood this Truth, and would not fail to instruct his Family, which were all humane souls that were left alive, in so necessary a matter which might have so great influence upon them to keep them in obedience to God, who had so lately delivered them from so universal a destruction. Nay, there is still extant the remainder of a Prophecy concerning a Judgment to come much ancients than the Flood. This we find cited by Saint Jude 14. *And Enoch also the seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints to execute judgment*

tuent upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

And this leads me to the last and most undeniable evidence of this truth,

4. The particular revelation of it in holy Scripture; but the testimonies of this Truth, that there is a Judgment to come, are so frequent in the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, that it were altogether needless to recite them to you. Every one that hath heard of the Gospel, must understand that is one chief Article of our Christian Profession. Nothing more plainly revealed, nothing more frequently inculcated, than that *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*

I proceed therefore to the second thing proposed, The Method of proceeding at that day, *Every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done; whether it be good or bad.*

That the good or evil of mens actions in this life, is the rule and measure according to which they shall be judged at the great day; that they who have

done good, shall receive the good they have done; and they who have done evil, shall receive according to that likewise; is a Truth so fully and plainly taught in holy Scripture, that one would think men could not easily mistake or deceive themselves in this matter. For

1. It is very plain, that no other way of proceeding can be agreeable to the Purity and Justice of the Divine Nature. *The righteous God loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the thing that is just;* and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. The righteous therefore, and they onely can be capable of reward from him, when he cometh to judge the Earth: and the wicked and unrighteous, and they onely must be the objects of his wrath and vengeance. To do otherwise than so, and to invert this method, would be a contradiction to all the divine Attributes, and to all the Methods whereby God hath made himself known to the Sons of men. And therefore the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* saith thus to the Almighty, *Wisd. xij. 15. For as much as thou art righteous thyself, thou*

thou orderest all things righteously, thinking it not agreeable to thy power to condemn him who hath not deserved to be punished. To which we may also add, That it is not agreeable to his Purity and Justice, to reward the unrighteous and disobedient.

And therefore we may observe, That in all the methods of Gods dealings with the Sons of men, he hath all along declared the greatest abhorrence of sin and wickedness, and the greatest severity against those that continued in the commission of it. It was Sin onely that brought Misery and Death into the World. *For by one mans disobedience sin entered into the World, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* And when God was pleased out of his infinite mercy and compassion to contrive the way of our recovery, and to send his Son into the World for our Redemption, he would not admit us to terms of Peace and Reconciliation without the greatest demonstration of his justice and severity against sin; and that in the Sufferings of his onely begotten Son. *For he was made sin for us, who know no sin; he bore our griefs and carried our*

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sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, by his stripes we are healed. Now we are not to persuade our selves that our Saviours sufferings in our stead can be available to us, or free us from the punishment of our sins, while we continue in them. For he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, for no other end, but that we being dead to sin might live unto righteousness; that so being saved from our sins here, we might be saved from the Wages of them hereafter. And therefore Saint Paul tells us, that the grace of God hath appeared to all men to bring salvation, no otherwise than by teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present World. Thus if we consider the nature of God, and his dealings with Mankind, we cannot but expect, that when he cometh to judge the World, he will judge according to righteousness: They who have done good shall be rewarded by him, and they who have done evil shall receive a due recompence of their evil deeds.

2. This is further evident from the several promises and threatnings in Scripture,

pture, which are all along made use of as Arguments to persuade us to the practice of righteousness and true holiness, and to discourage and dissuade us from sin and wickedness; which it were in vain to do, if the promises of the Gospel can be due to any but upon condition of their obedience; or if the Wrath to come could be avoided any otherwise than by forsaking those sins to which it is threatned. Thus Saint Paul argues from the promises of the Gospel, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Thus again S. Peter i. 4. tells, That by the Gospel there are given unto us great and pretious promises, that by these ye may be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through Lust, and besides this, giving all diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity. For so an entrance shall be ministred unto you

effectually into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now these and the like Exhortations would be of no force at all to persuade us, if these promises could be attained without the performance of these conditions.

In a word, in all the descriptions of a Judgment to come, there is nothing plainer than this that I now plead for; that God will reward every one according to what he hath done. I shall mention but two places more. *Rom.ij.6. God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentiles: For there is no respect of persons with God. The other place is Mat.xxv. where our Saviour having given us a large description of those good Works which shall then be rewarded, and having there represented the vanity of those mens excuses who had not wrought them, he concludes with this sentence, these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

There remains onely to draw some inferences from what hath been said, that may be of use to us for the government of our lives.

I. If there be a Judgment to come, wherein men shall receive rewards and punishments according to their actions, whether good or bad; it is easie then to understand how much those men deceive themselves, who hope to be saved by vertue of any absolute and inconditionate decree. For if God have from eternitie fore-ordained such and such particular persons to eternal life, and others to eternal damnation, without any consideration of their actions, whether good or bad, then certainly God cannot proceed in judgment according to the method before described, nor could the promises and threatnings of the Gospel have any force of persuation to engage men in the practice of Vertue, or to discourage them from Sin and Wickedness. In vain would the Apostle here make use of the terrours of the Lord to persuade men, if God have before determined, that such a certain number of them shall not escape the wrath to come, whatsoever diligence they
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use on their parts. On the contrary, the promises of the Gospel cannot have any reasonable force to engage men to obedience, if once they knew and believed that their future state was from everlasting unalterably fixed, so that they could not fall short of it by any neglect. Nay, upon this supposition all the various methods of persuasion, which God uses in Scripture to bring men to repentance and a better life, prove nothing else but illusion and hypocrisie. For that God should so often by his holy Prophets and Apostles invite and exhort and beseech all men, that they would turn from their evil ways and live, when in the mean time he hath excluded many myriads of men from any possibility of salvation by an absolute and irresistible decree, which no endeavour of theirs can revoke or cancel; this way of proceeding cannot by any means consist with that truth and sincerity, and goodness, which is inseparable from the divine nature. We must therefore conclude, that if there be a Judgment to come, when all men shall receive rewards and punishments according to what they have done, then certainly no man shall ever be excluded from those rewards but
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by his own fault; nor yet any man obtain the same, but by a due diligence in working out his salvation, and performing those conditions upon which they are promised.

2. From what hath been said concerning the method of Gods proceeding at the Judgment of the last Day, we may also observe that those men do extremely mistake the conditions of salvation, who talk of being saved by Faith, as it is distinguished from good works and obedience; who take so much pains to cry down the value of our good works, as though they had little or no influence in the justification or salvation of a Christian. For surely if we shall be judged according to what we have done, Faith alone cannot be the whole condition required on our parts in order to our salvation. It is true indeed, glorious things are spoken of Faith in holy Scripture, but these things must not be understood of a bare assent to the truth of the Gospel, which is the proper importance of that word *Faith*; but of such a Faith as is a principle of life and action, such a Faith as hath influence upon the whole course of our lives, and is not contradicted by our practice and conversation;

sation; a Faith that worketh by love and is fruitful of good works and obedience. Thus it is not to be considered as a single Vertue and separate from the rest, but as being the fruitful parent of all other Christian Vertues, and including them in it. For if we understand Faith in a more strict sense, as distinct from an holy conversation, it is no more than the Devils themselves may pretend to; and yet this is so far from being any relief to them, that it is the great aggravation of their misery. To know and be assured of the glorious things revealed in the Gospel, and to know withal that they themselves are finally excluded from the benefit of them; this doubtless is a mighty aggravation of their horror, and we may well conclude as *S. James* doth, that they *believe and tremble*, nay that this belief doth make them tremble.

3. If we shall be judged according to what we have done in the body, it then follows, that all that is to be done by us in the great work of our Salvation, must be performed in our life time, whilst we are in the body. Now must we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and not leave any thing to be done

done after our death, either by our selves or others. This I observe in opposition to that Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, which supposes that some sins are expiated after death, and purged away by the fire of Purgatory, and by the Prayers and Sacrifices of those that are left alive. But this is not onely a vain and groundless opinion, but certainly doth much tend to the hindrance of Piety, and lessening mens care of their future state. As the Tree falleth so it lieth. As a man goeth out of this World, such will be his future state; and he will be judged according to what he was when he left the body, according to what he had done in the body.

4. If it be thus certain that we must all appear before the Judgment seat of *Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in his body, this certainly ought to awaken our diligence in the business of our Salvation; that to day, while it is called to day, we break off our sins by a sincere and hearty repentance; that knowing the terrours of the Lord, we pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. For surely did men seriously consider that there is a day coming, when all
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the hidden works of darkness shall be made manifest, when the secrets of all mens hearts shall be revealed, when all the close impieties which had passed here undiscerned, should be laid open before God and all the World; they would not now so fondly flatter themselves with hopes of secrecie or impunity. Did men seriously reflect upon the terribleness of that great day, when God shall appear with ten thousand of his Saints to take vengeance on them that have not feared his name, did they often think upon that dreadful sentence which will then be pronounced against all impenitent sinners, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels;* this certainly, if any thing, would put a check to the bold impiety of this Age. Men would not then dare so openly to defie Heaven, and blaspheme the Majesty of the great God, who will at that day appear so terrible, nor would they continue by their hardness and impenitent hearts, to treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

On the contrary, as the terrours of that day ought to make us sensible of our danger,

ger, if we continue in disobedience, so the glorious reward which shall at that day be given to those that have lived obediently to the will of God, ought to be a most effectual motive to persuade us thereunto. For what greater encouragement to our duty, than the consideration of those great and glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love him? Who would not willingly forsake all the flattering joys and transitory pleasures of this life, that he may secure to himself such an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, which God the righteous Judge shall give him at that day? Or who would not despise all the sufferings of this life, which may possibly attend him in the practice of his duty, when he remembers that these light afflictions, which endure but for a moment, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?

Now the great God grant us all his grace, that we may have the judgment of the last day always present to our minds, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearance

pearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: that when we come to stand before that great Tribunal, we may be presented pure and unblamable in his sight; and that not for any merits of our own, but through the mediation of our blessed Saviour: To whom, with the Father, and Eternal Spirit be ascribed, as is most due, all power, praise, thanksgiving, and obedience, for evermore.

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